



THE ADVENTURES OF BLAKE & MORTIMER

Based on the characters of EDGAR P. JACOBS

YVES SENTE • ANDRÉ JUILLARD

THE OATH OF THE FIVE LORDS



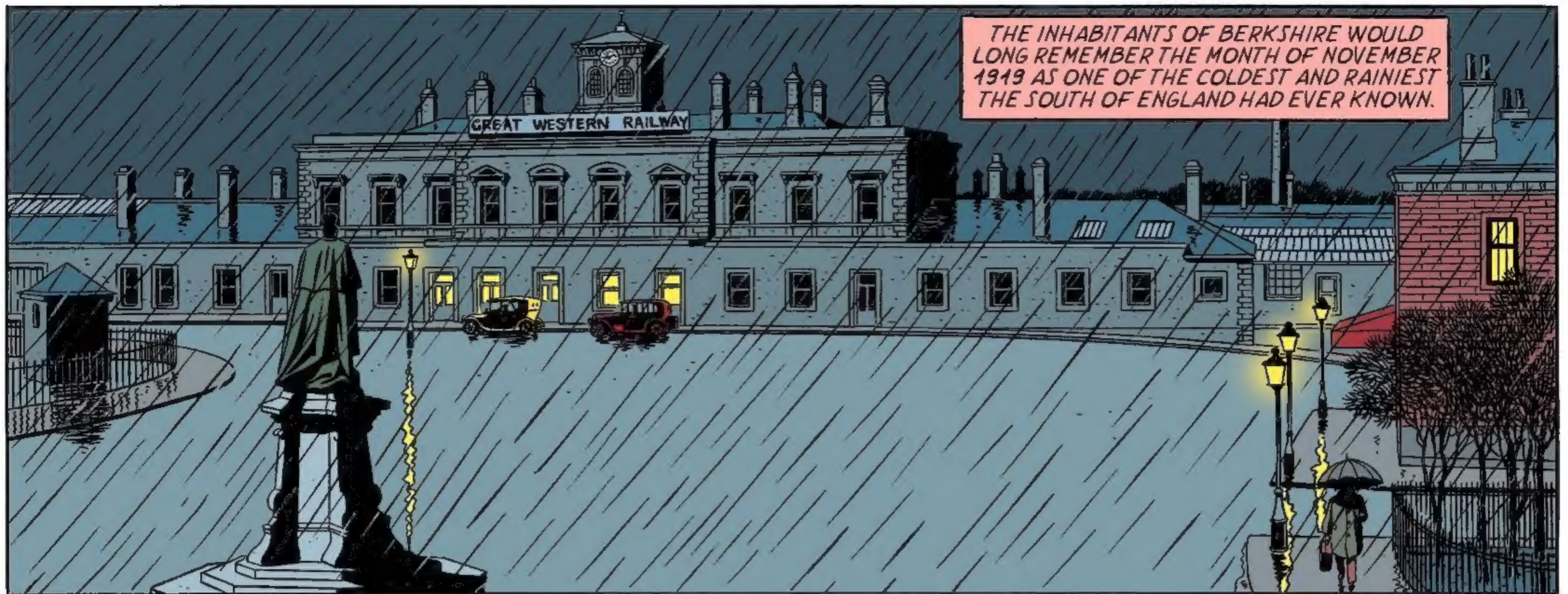
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Script: Yves Sente • Artwork: André Juillard



Colours: Madeleine DeMille



THE INHABITANTS OF BERKSHIRE WOULD LONG REMEMBER THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER 1919 AS ONE OF THE COLDEST AND RAINIEST THE SOUTH OF ENGLAND HAD EVER KNOWN.



THAT EVENING, A MIX OF GLOOMINESS AND RESIGNATION COULD BE SEEN ON THE FACES OF THE FEW TRAVELLERS WAITING FOR A CONNECTION IN THE DAMP READING TRAIN STATION.



My goodness! Will this deluge of rain ever stop? Barman, a double whisky! I feel like all this water has seeped into my veins!



Aaaah! Blessed be our ancestors who invented this wonderful drink! I'd never have been able to board my connection to Bristol without this...

To Bristol, I doubt it. That train left ten minutes ago. But if you wait for the next one, you'll have time to finish the bottle.



There's only the London train tonight. To go to Bristol, you'll have to come back tomorrow.

Tomorrow?! But that's impossible! A taxi! I need a taxi!



My wife will kill me!

There's a phone box outside.



There's Peter. He's got the suitcase.

I'm not blind, Agent Carter!



WITHOUT SHOWING THE SLIGHTEST FEAR, THE TRAVELLER OBEYS THE STRANGER'S ORDERS. INSIDE THE CAR, HE IS WELCOMED BY A VOICE THAT SEEMS FAMILIAR.

Do sit down, Colonel Lawrence.

You can stop worrying about your suitcase. It's in good hands.

Lieutenant ... Alister Crawford? What are you doing? Have you gone mad?!

Mad?! Coming from you, that word is almost more amusing than insulting! Listen carefully...

Shortly after leaving the Army in Cairo, I was hired by MI5. Our mission is to fight Communist corruption within the British Army, as well as all traitors of your ilk!

Good grief! So our government isn't just losing its grip on its Arab policy!

As condescending as ever, eh, Lawrence? But you're no longer a 'colonel' when dealing with me. In fact, you're nothing at all, no matter what your admirers say!

For months I've been watching your every move. An analysis of the documents seized today will only confirm that you intend to destabilise the Empire and the peace talks in the making.

Your personal grudge is making you delirious, Crawford. I've always done what His Majesty's government expected of me. Today, I merely expect it to honour the promises we made to the Arab nation.

The 'Arab nation'?! You must be joking! Listen to me, you dirty little Communist: the war is over and the rules have changed, d'you hear? There's no question of your book being published – not with those antipatriotic chapters at any rate!

What?! And what happens to freedom of speech in that lovely 'patriotic' vision of yours?!

I told you, I work for the Security Service now. If you won't rewrite your book for your government, you will at least do it in the interest of ... your mother and brothers. And we will give the reworking of your manuscript all the time needed! Do I make myself clear?!

We won't let you off the hook, Lawrence. And none of your 'powerful friends' can do a thing about it. Even if they are Colonial Secretary...



THIRTY-FIVE YEARS LATER, THE GHOSTS OF THOMAS LAWRENCE AND ALISTER CRAWFORD ARE ABOUT TO RESURFACE AMID THE SNOW-STORM THAT LASHES THE ROOF-TOPS OF OXFORD UNIVERSITY...



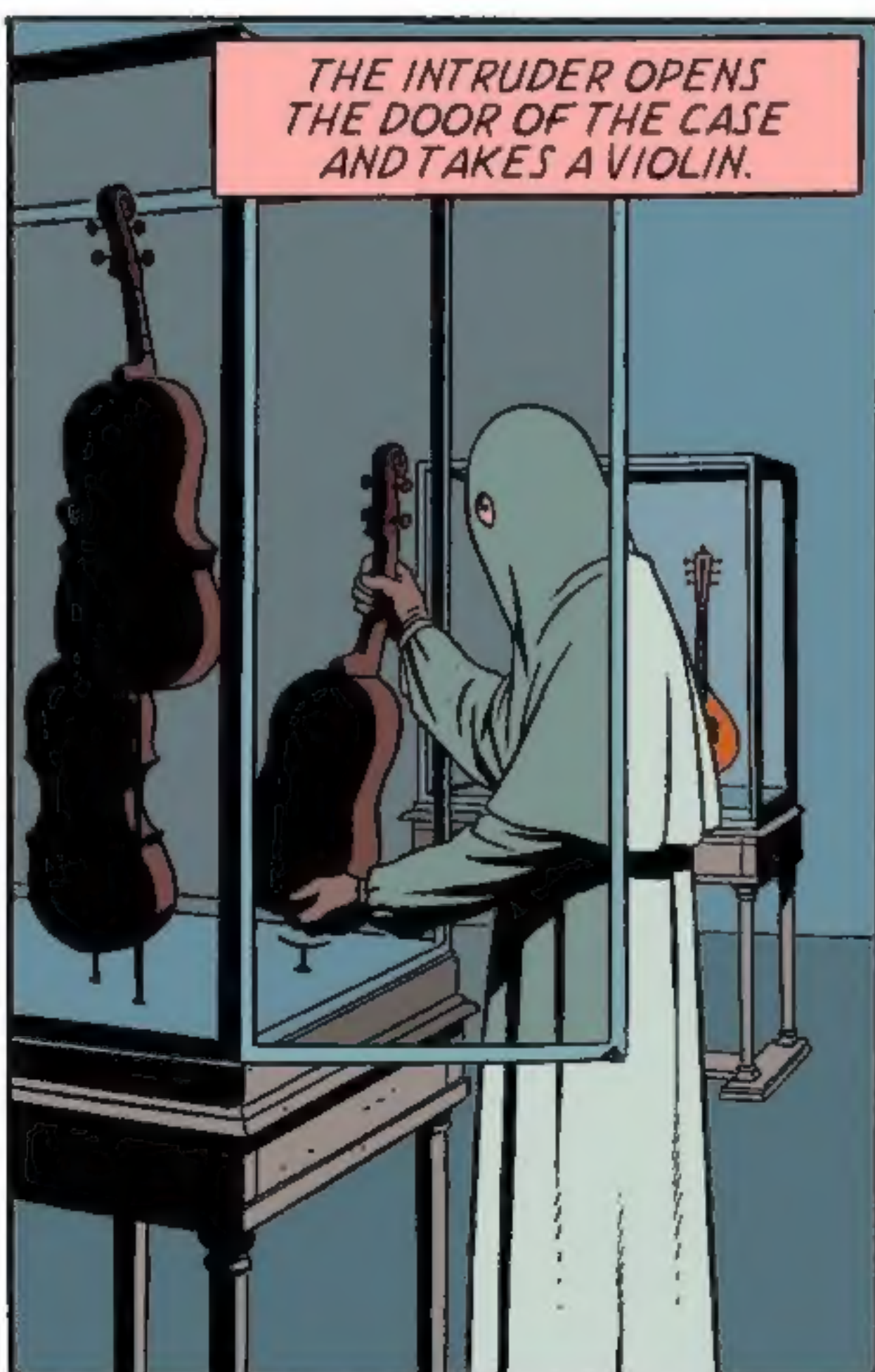
ATOP THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM, A MYSTERIOUS FIGURE SMOOTHLY HEADS TOWARDS A SKYLIGHT LEFT OPEN.



CONFIDENTLY MAKING ITS WAY THROUGH THE MUSEUM...



...IT EVENTUALLY STOPS BEFORE A CASE CONTAINING ANTIQUE STRING INSTRUMENTS.



THE INTRUDER OPENS THE DOOR OF THE CASE AND TAKES A VIOLIN.



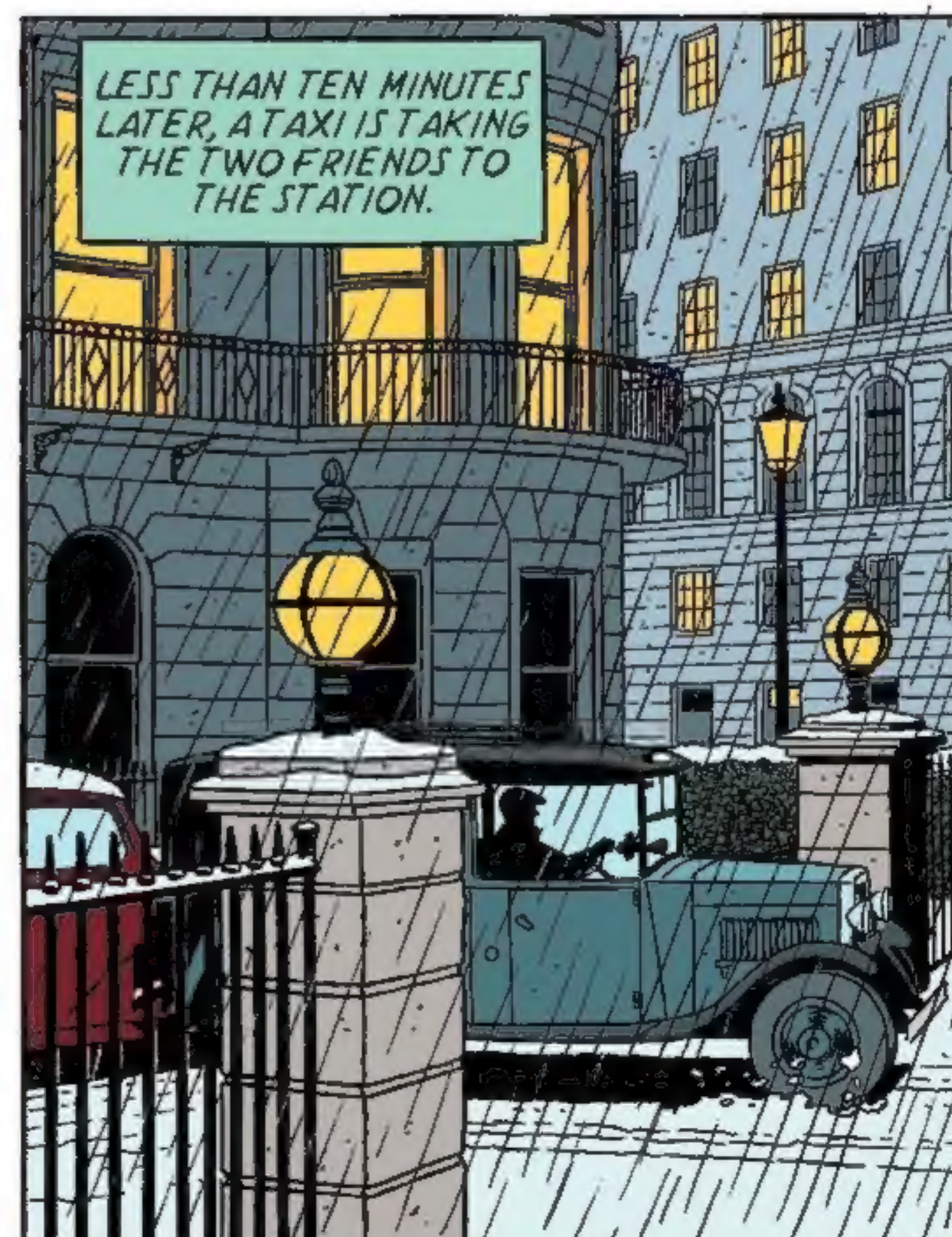
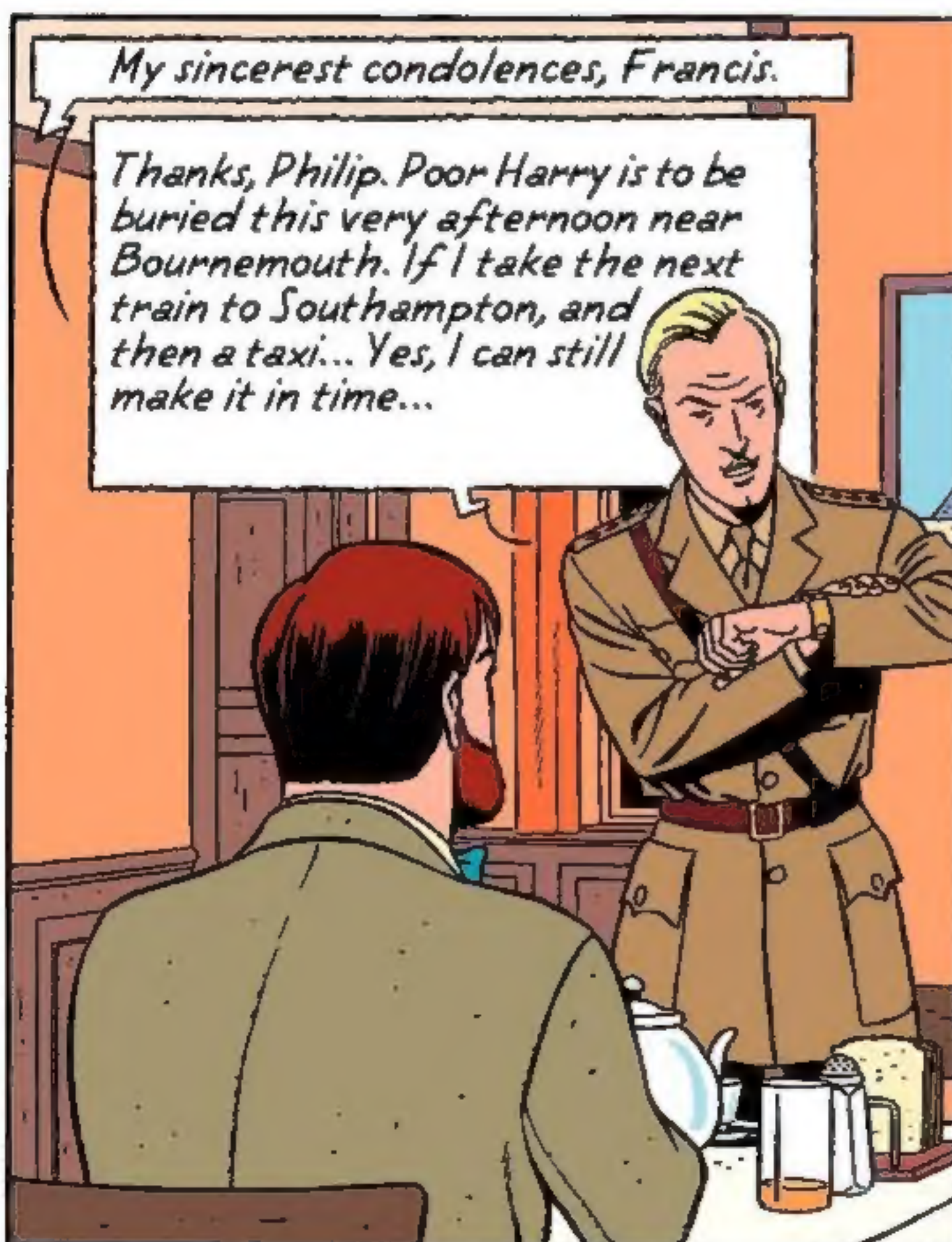
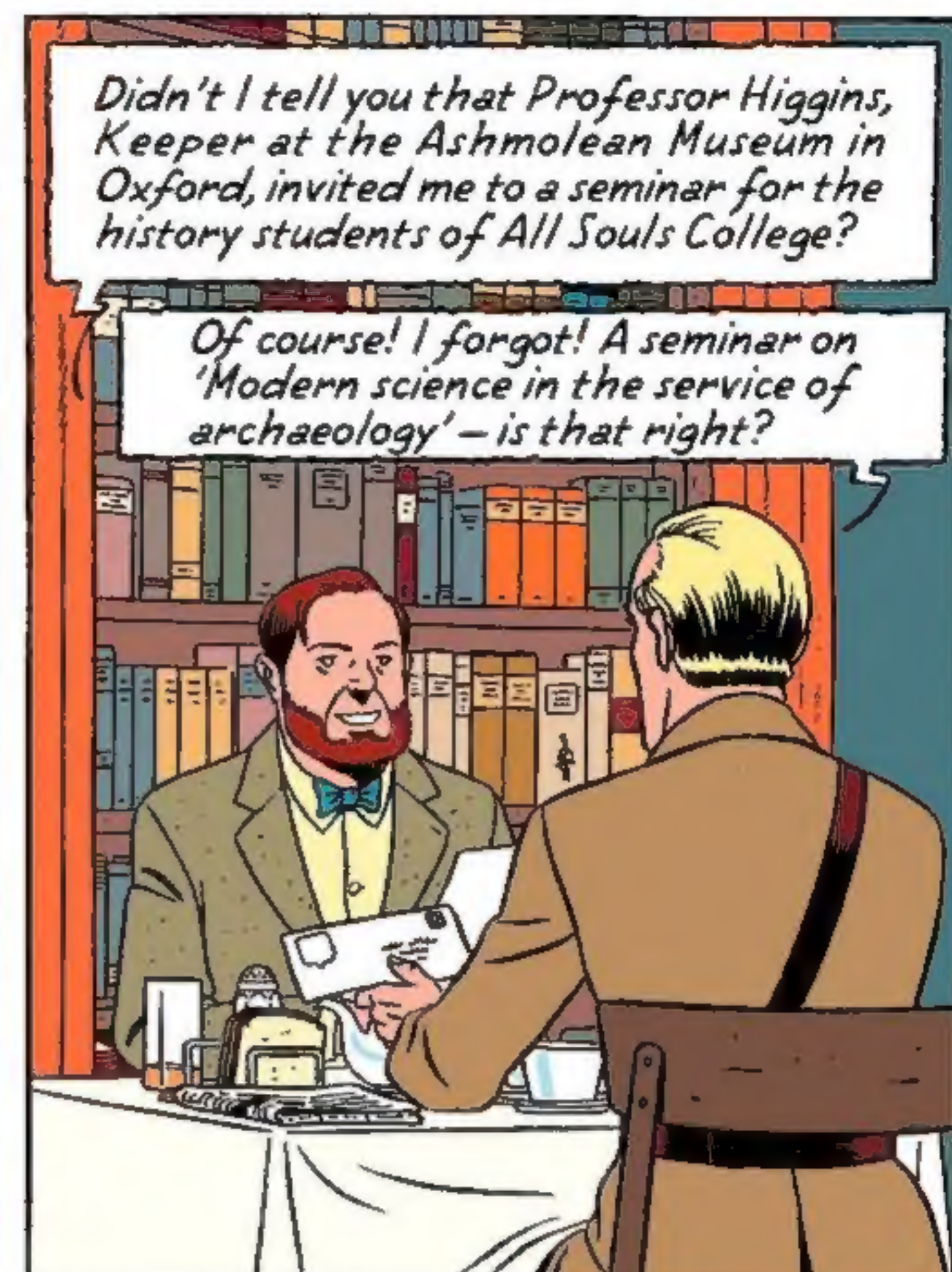
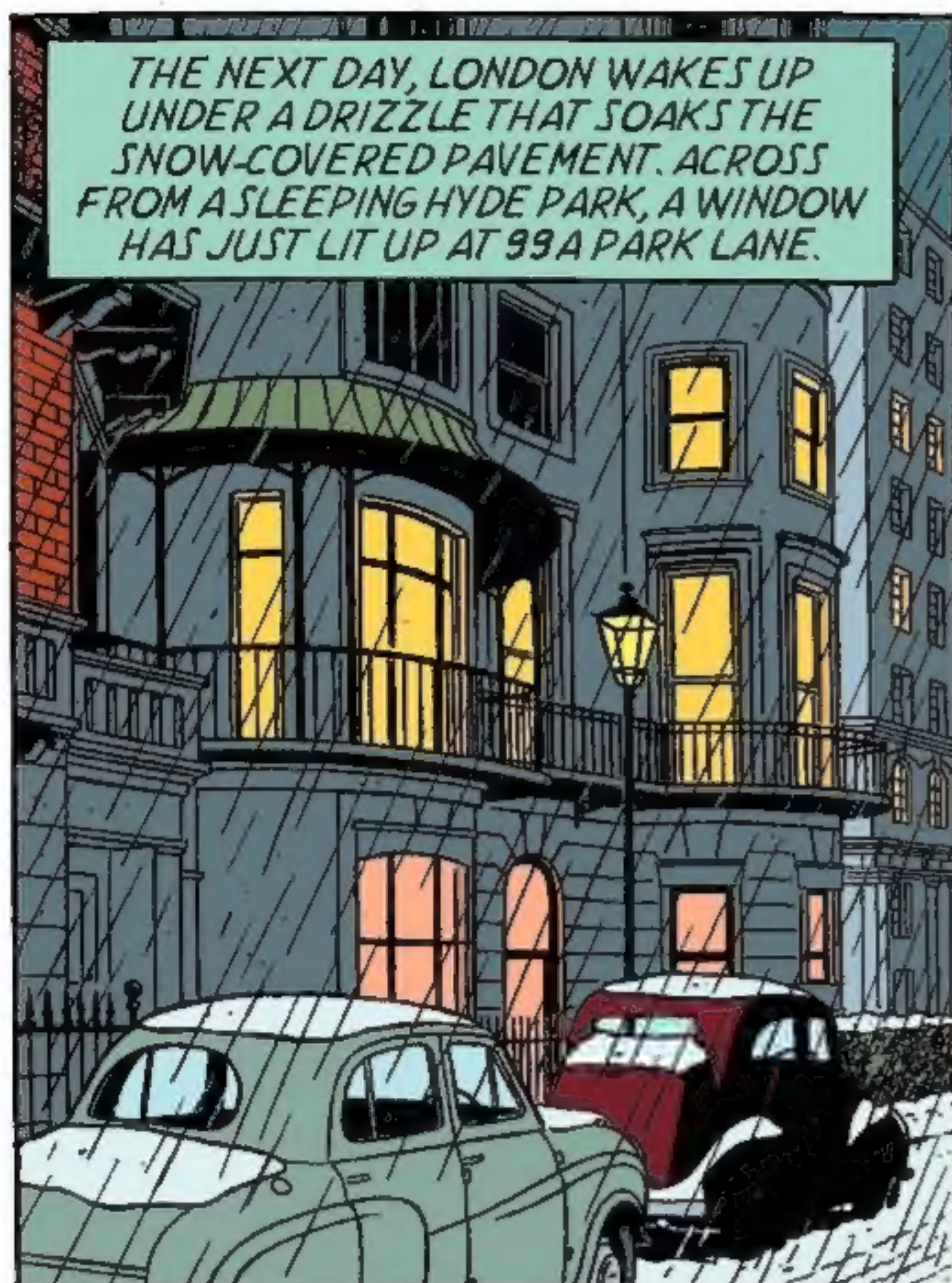
SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, THE GHOSTLY SILHOUETTE HEADS BACK UP THE STAIRS...

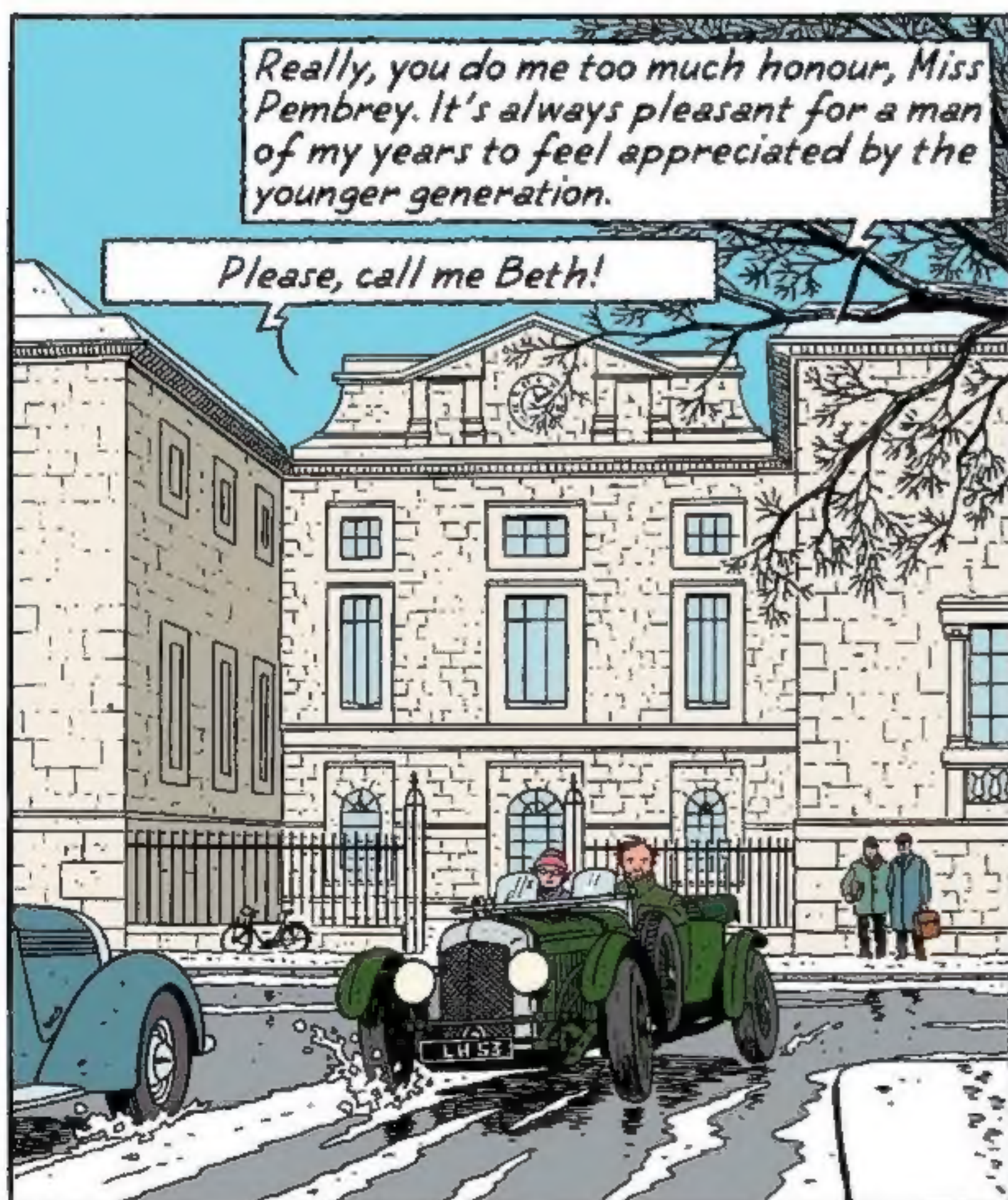
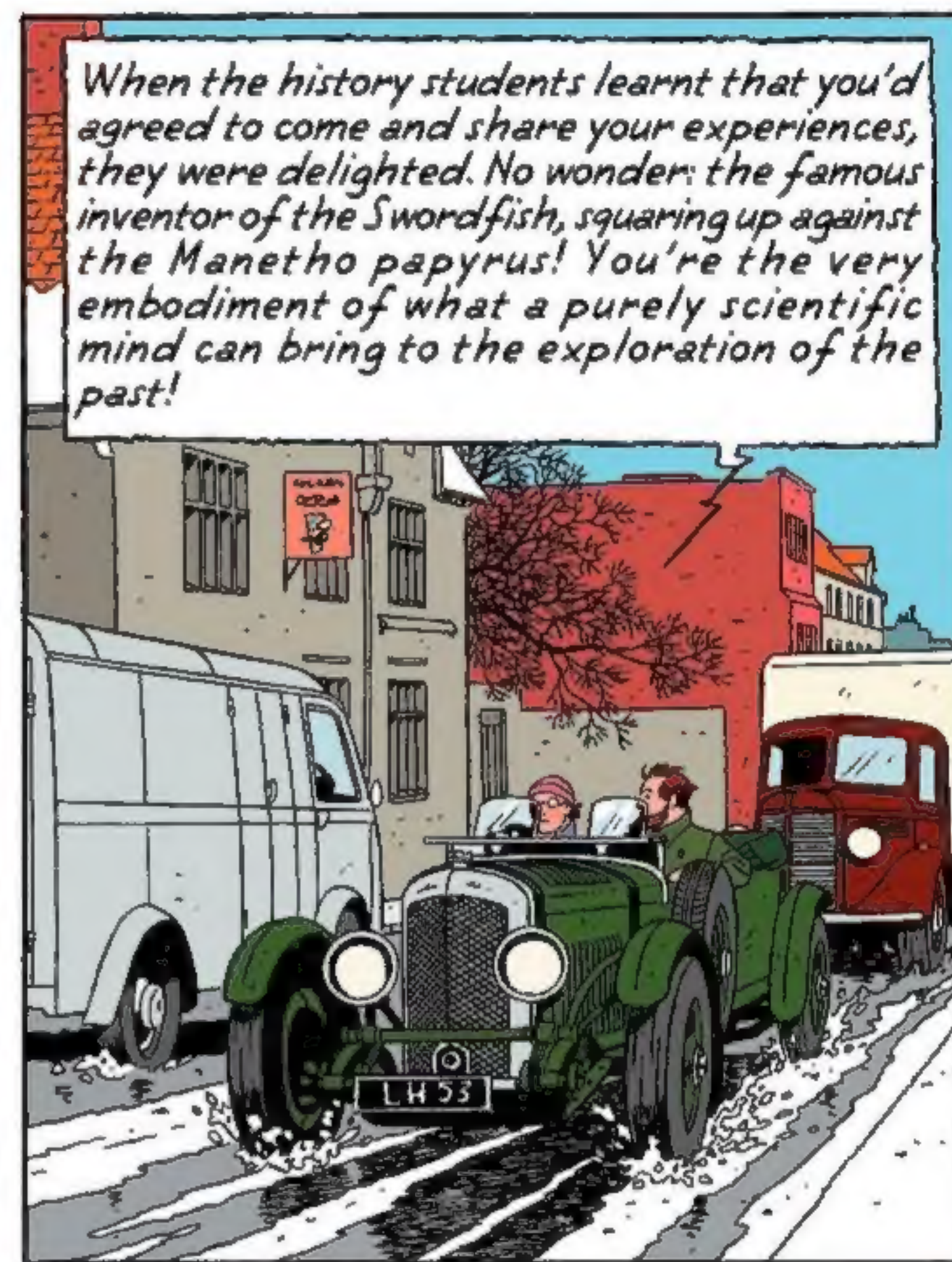


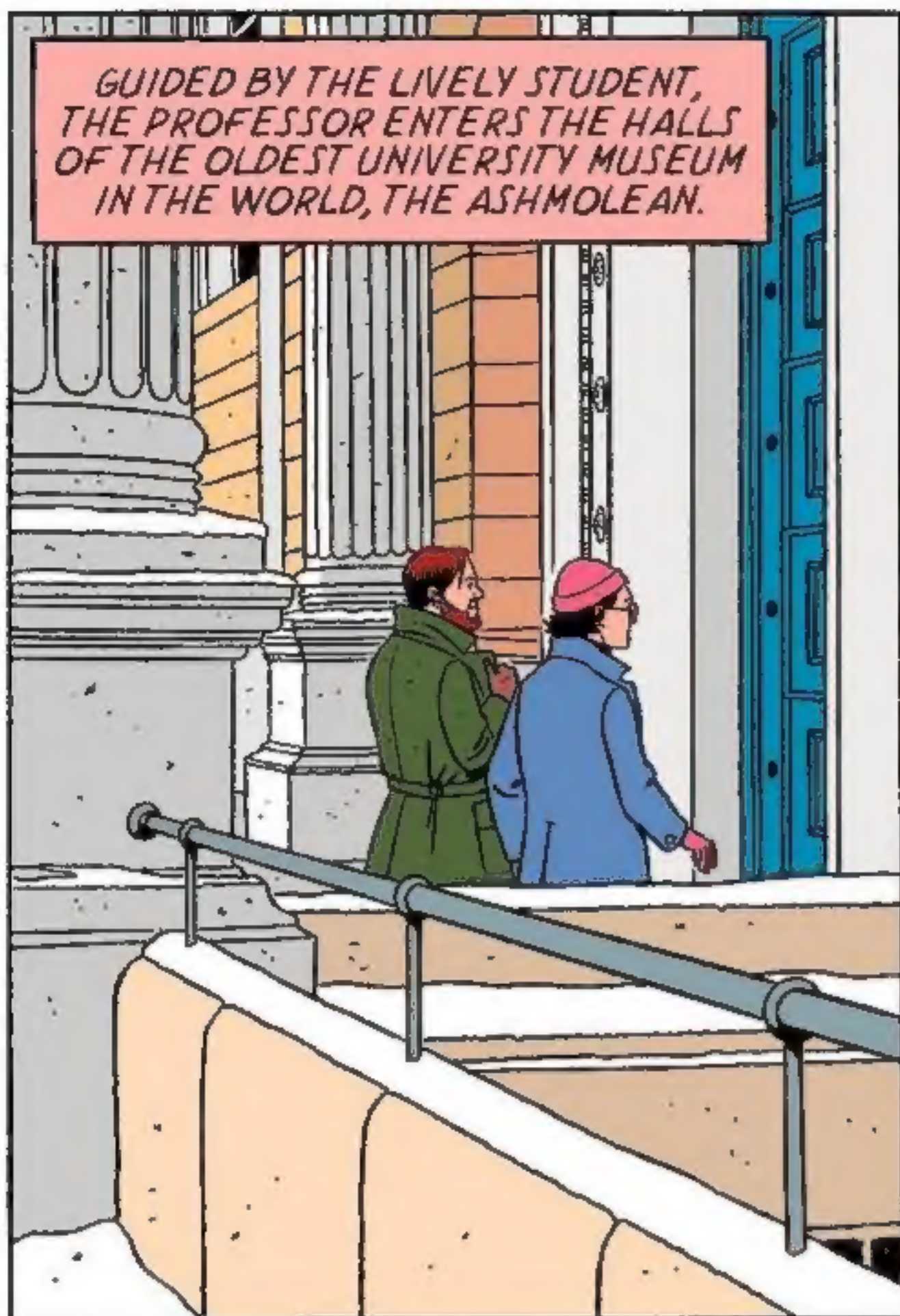
...AND LEAVES FROM WHERE IT ARRIVED...



...UNDER THE GAZE OF A SILENT PRESENCE.







GUIDED BY THE LIVELY STUDENT, THE PROFESSOR ENTERS THE HALLS OF THE OLDEST UNIVERSITY MUSEUM IN THE WORLD, THE ASHMOLEAN.



THE ECLECTICISM OF THE COLLECTIONS HOUSED THERE INEVITABLY CAPTURES VISITORS' IMAGINATIONS, AND MORTIMER IS NO EXCEPTION.



Here's Professor Higgins. It seems he's finished giving his statement to the police.



Professor Mortimer! Such a pleasure to meet you – albeit in such a shamefully rude manner. Chief inspector Herbert Rush was kind enough to come immediately when we reported a theft, and...

No apology needed, Professor. I completely understand!

I was leaving anyway, Keeper. I'll let you know as soon as I find something.



First things first. Allow me to introduce my staff. You already know my indispensable Beth. This is 'Mac' Taggart, the supervisor of our watch. And last but not least, our good Alfred Clayton, without whom we'd all be lost!

How do you do?

How do you do?

Er...



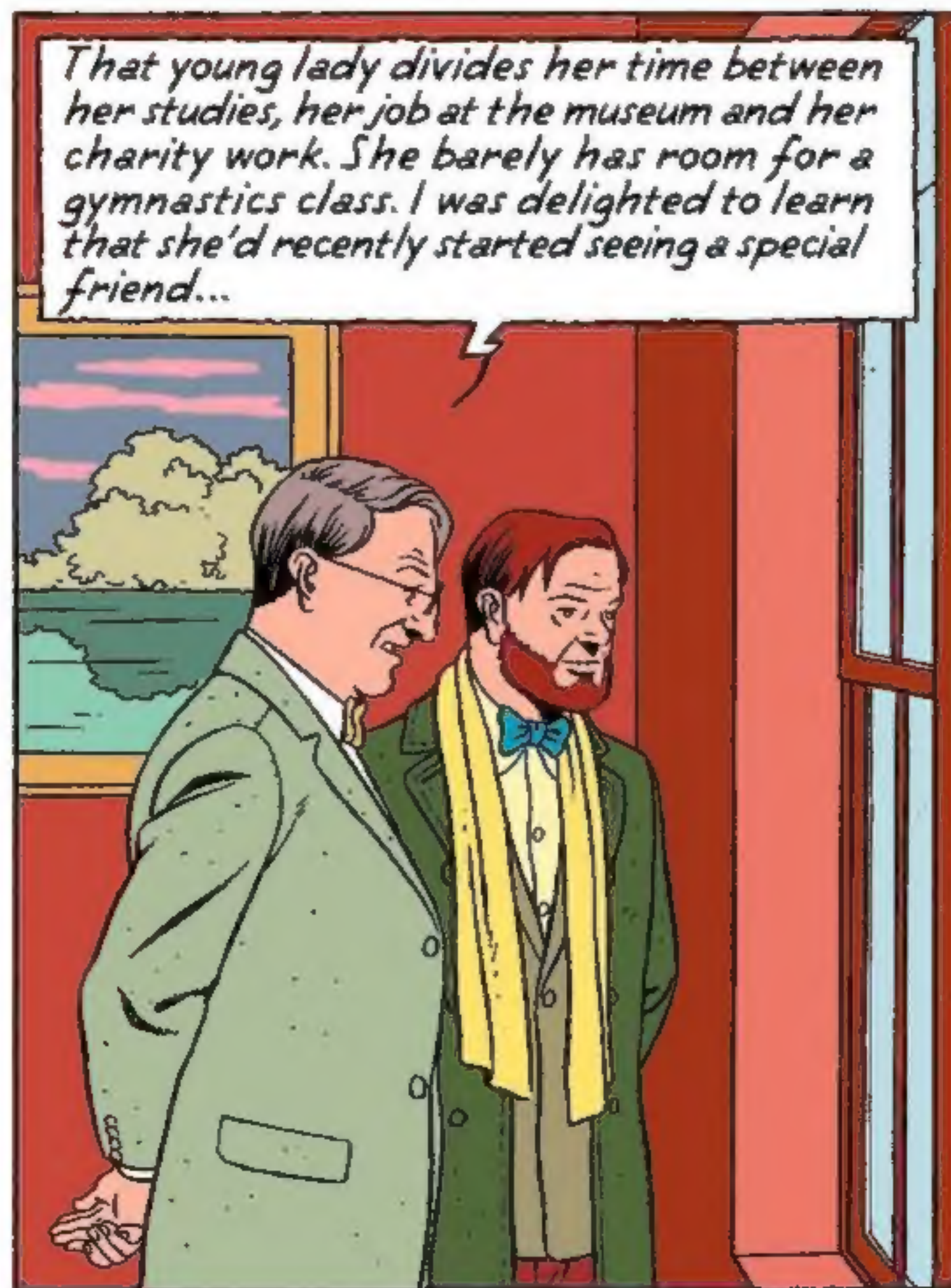
Alfred is a bit ... er ... simple, as you must have noticed. We give him a room in the attic and some wages in exchange for small maintenance jobs. It was our generous Beth's idea!

Your reputation as a gentleman has spread far beyond the limits of this museum, Professor. I'm not surprised to discover it's no myth!



Forgive me for reminding you in view of the circumstances, Professor, but I'd asked if I could take the afternoon off...

Indeed you had, Beth. Off you go, then! It shall be my pleasure to show Professor Mortimer our museum.



That young lady divides her time between her studies, her job at the museum and her charity work. She barely has room for a gymnastics class. I was delighted to learn that she'd recently started seeing a special friend...



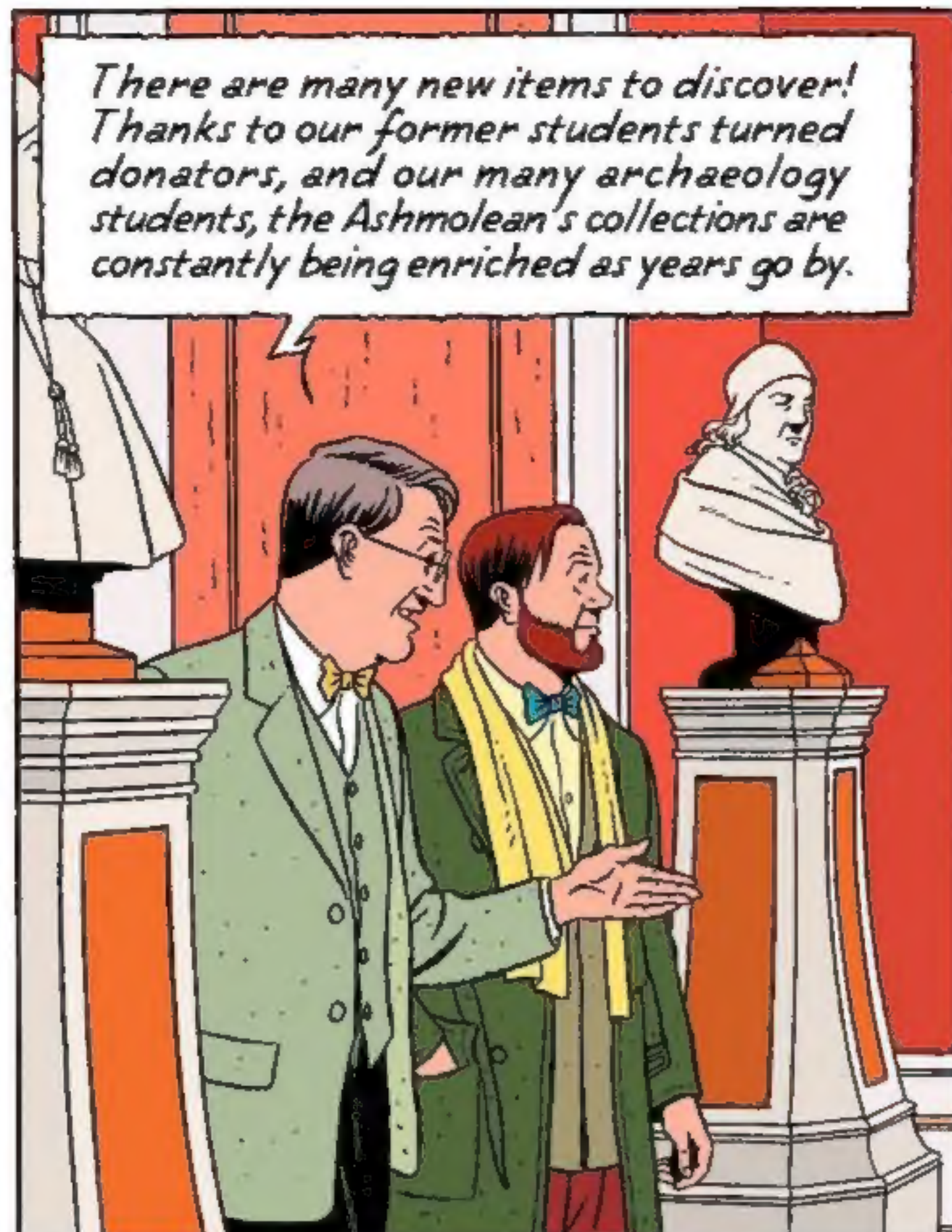
I'm still moved by the freshness of young love. Aren't you, Professor?

Quite so, Professor, quite so!



Have you ever had the opportunity to visit our museum, Professor?

A long time ago, when I was a student in Glasgow, I took advantage of a holiday to come to Oxford and discover a small part of your collections.



There are many new items to discover! Thanks to our former students turned donors, and our many archaeology students, the Ashmolean's collections are constantly being enriched as years go by.

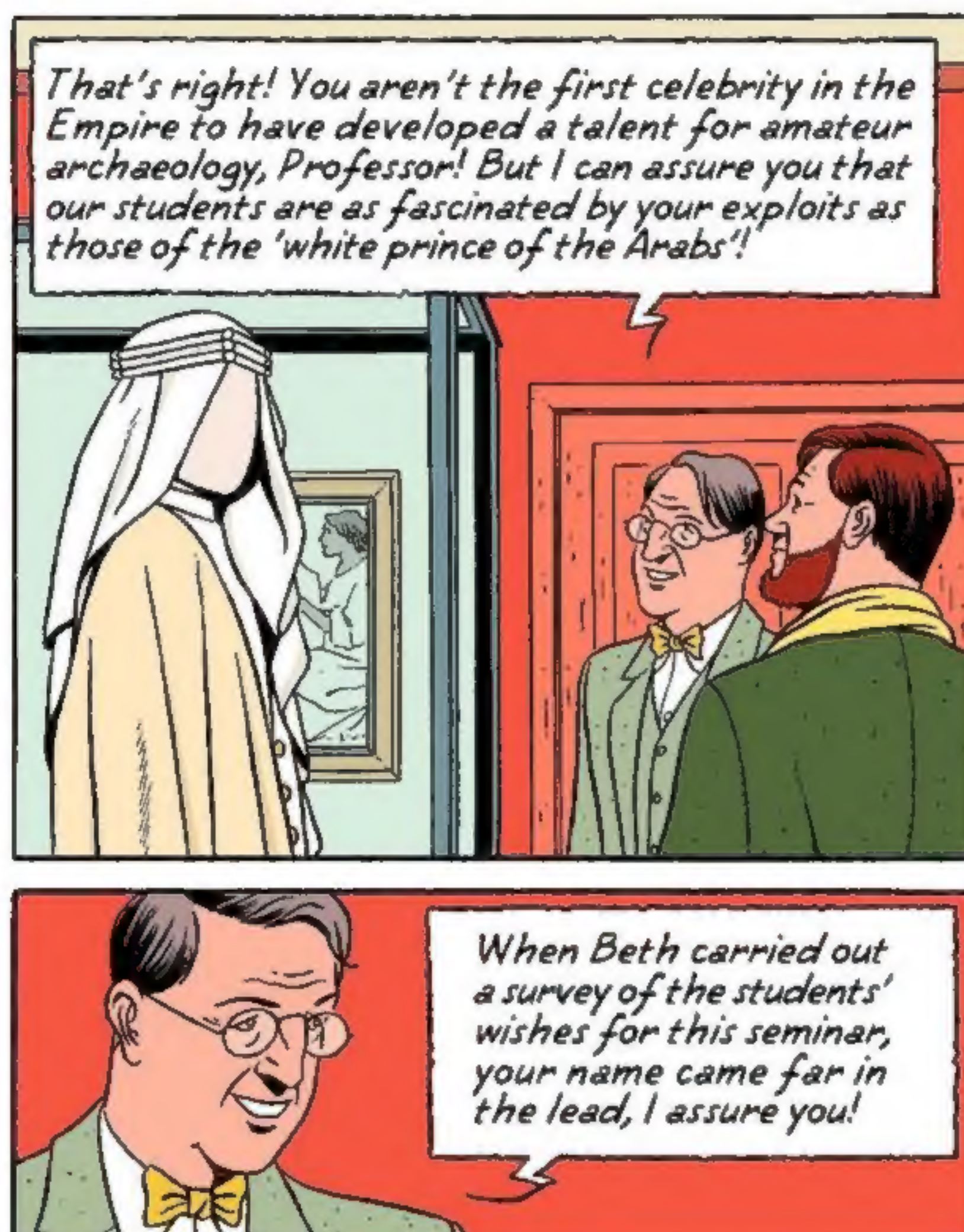


Take the famous Lawrence of Arabia, who was the darling of the press in 1918 after his campaign to unify the Arab tribes allied with our troops in fighting the Ottoman enemy. He brought a lot to our museum.

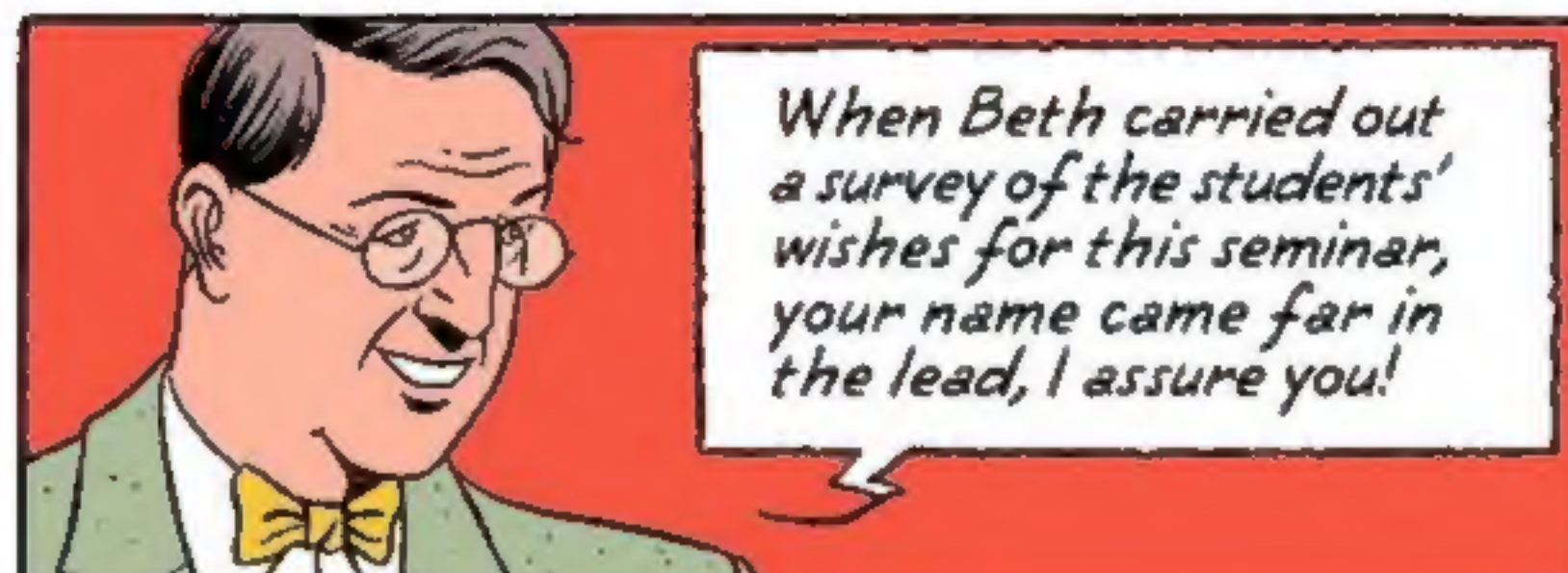


People seldom realise that he was first a brilliant archaeology student at Jesus College in Oxford. Like many of our graduates, he donated most of his finds to the museum.

I wasn't aware of that, I admit.



That's right! You aren't the first celebrity in the Empire to have developed a talent for amateur archaeology, Professor! But I can assure you that our students are as fascinated by your exploits as those of the 'white prince of the Arabs'!



When Beth carried out a survey of the students' wishes for this seminar, your name came far in the lead, I assure you!



Well, my friends? Are our visitors no longer in danger of stepping on broken glass?

No, Keeper. I'm going to put up a security rope until the glazier arrives. Don't you worry.

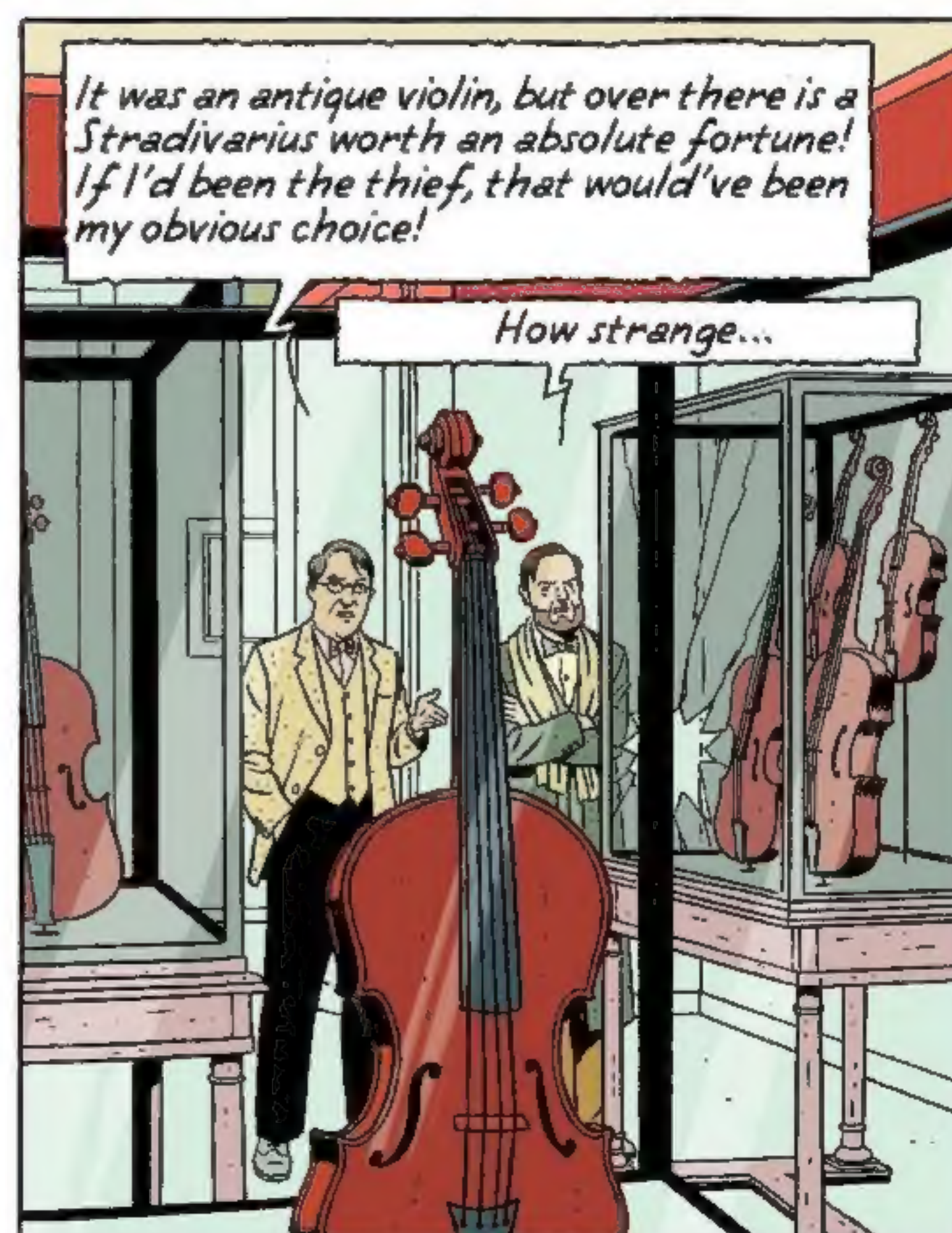


Decent chaps! It's a good job they're here. Managing a museum is sometimes quite taxing.



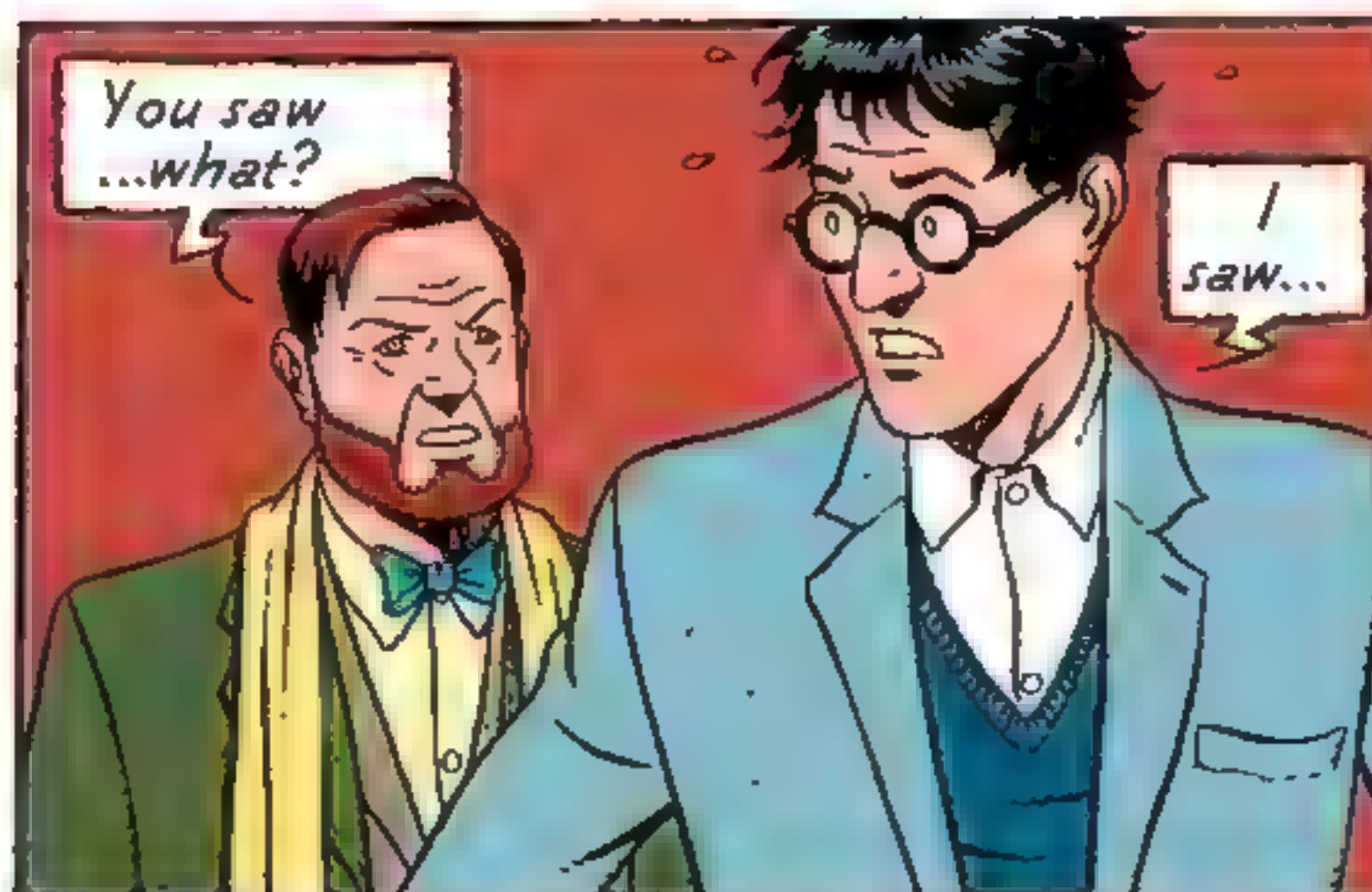
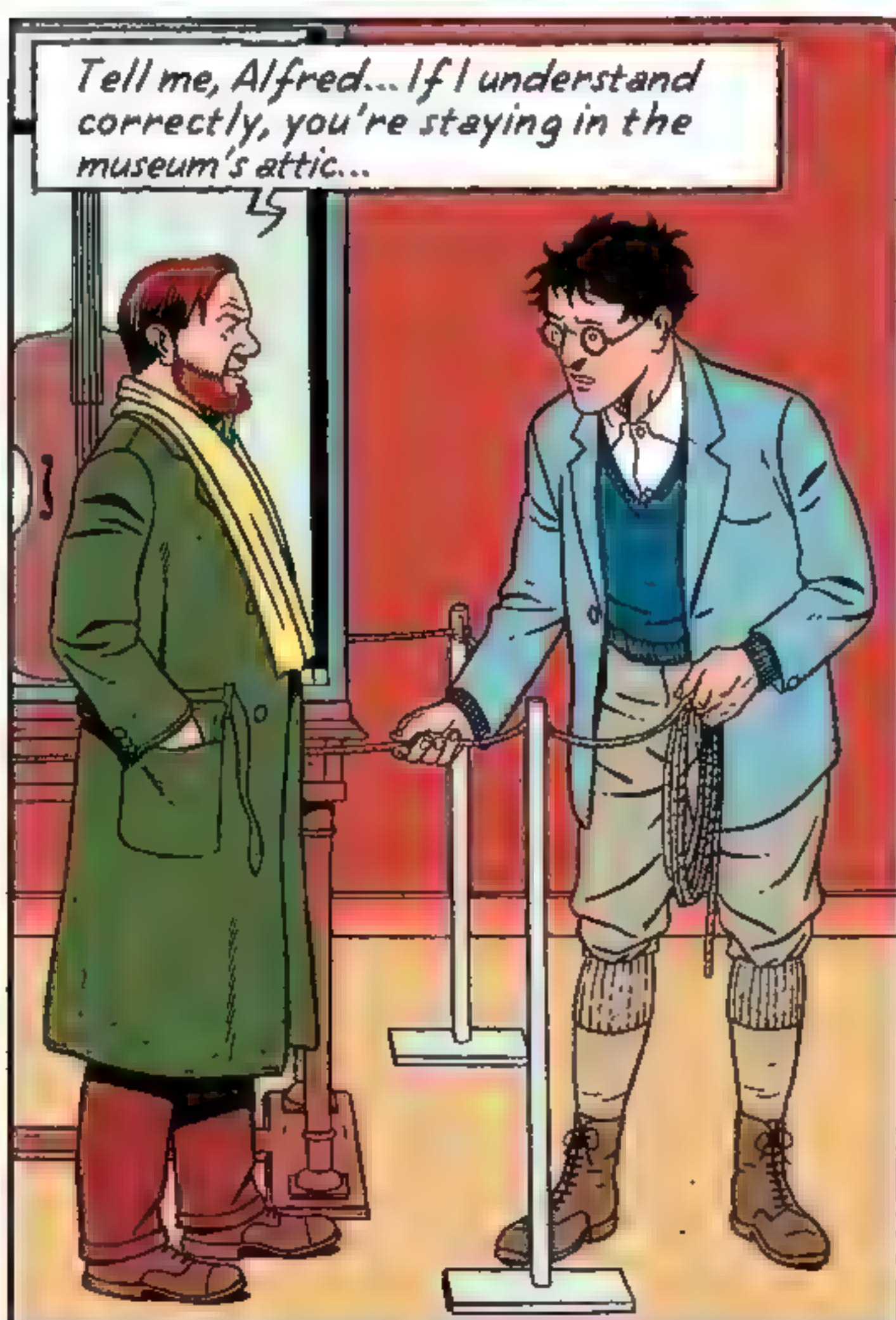
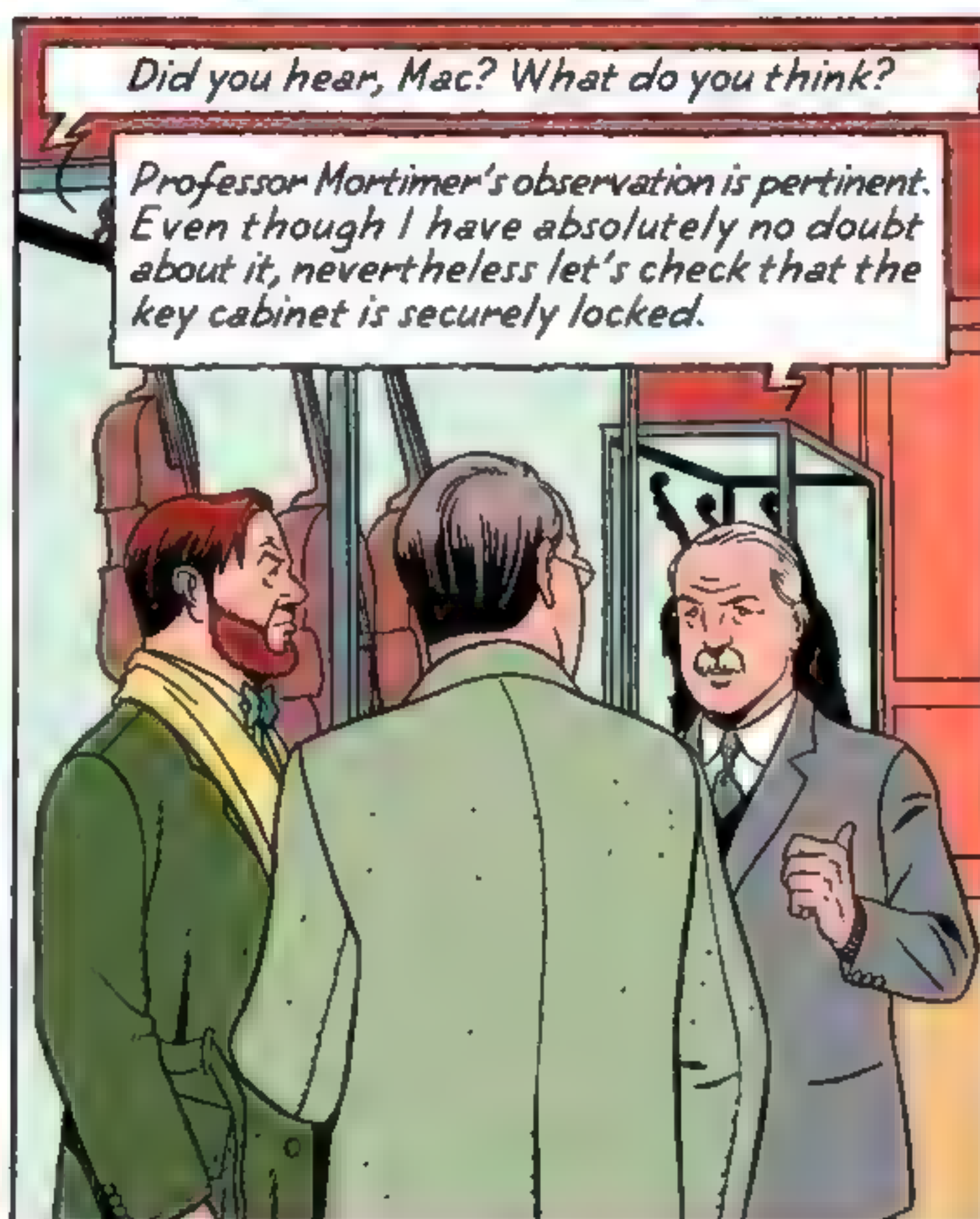
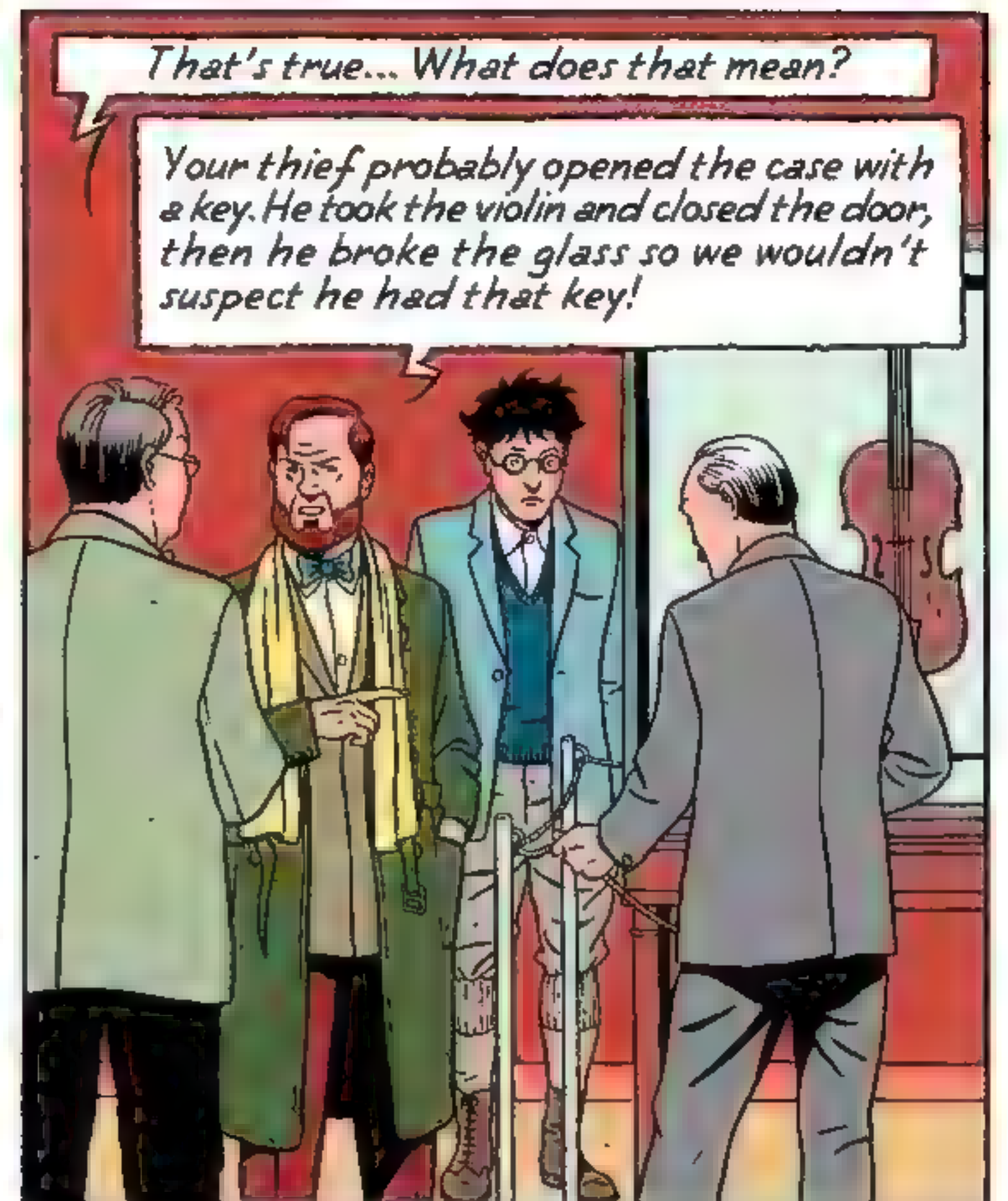
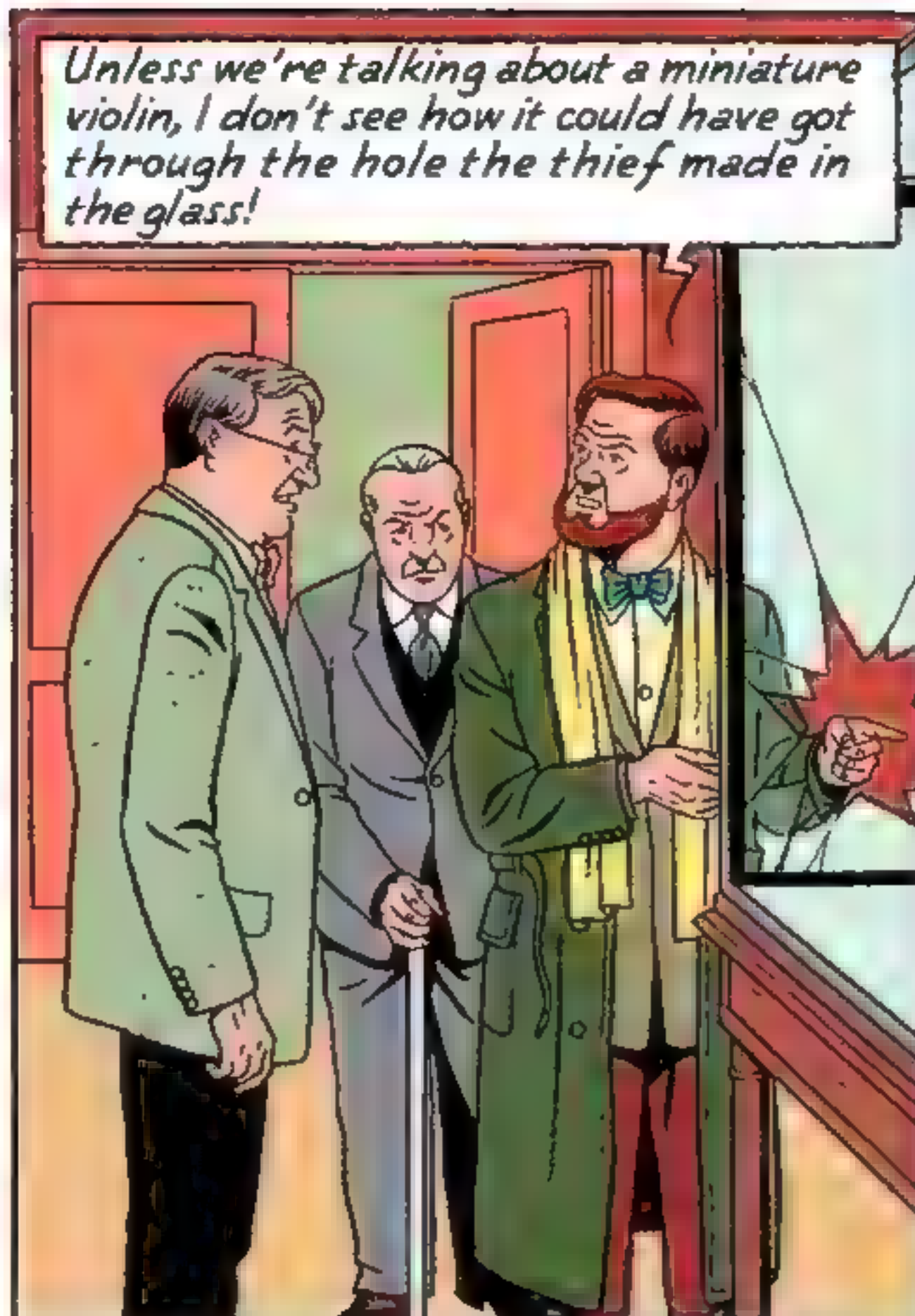
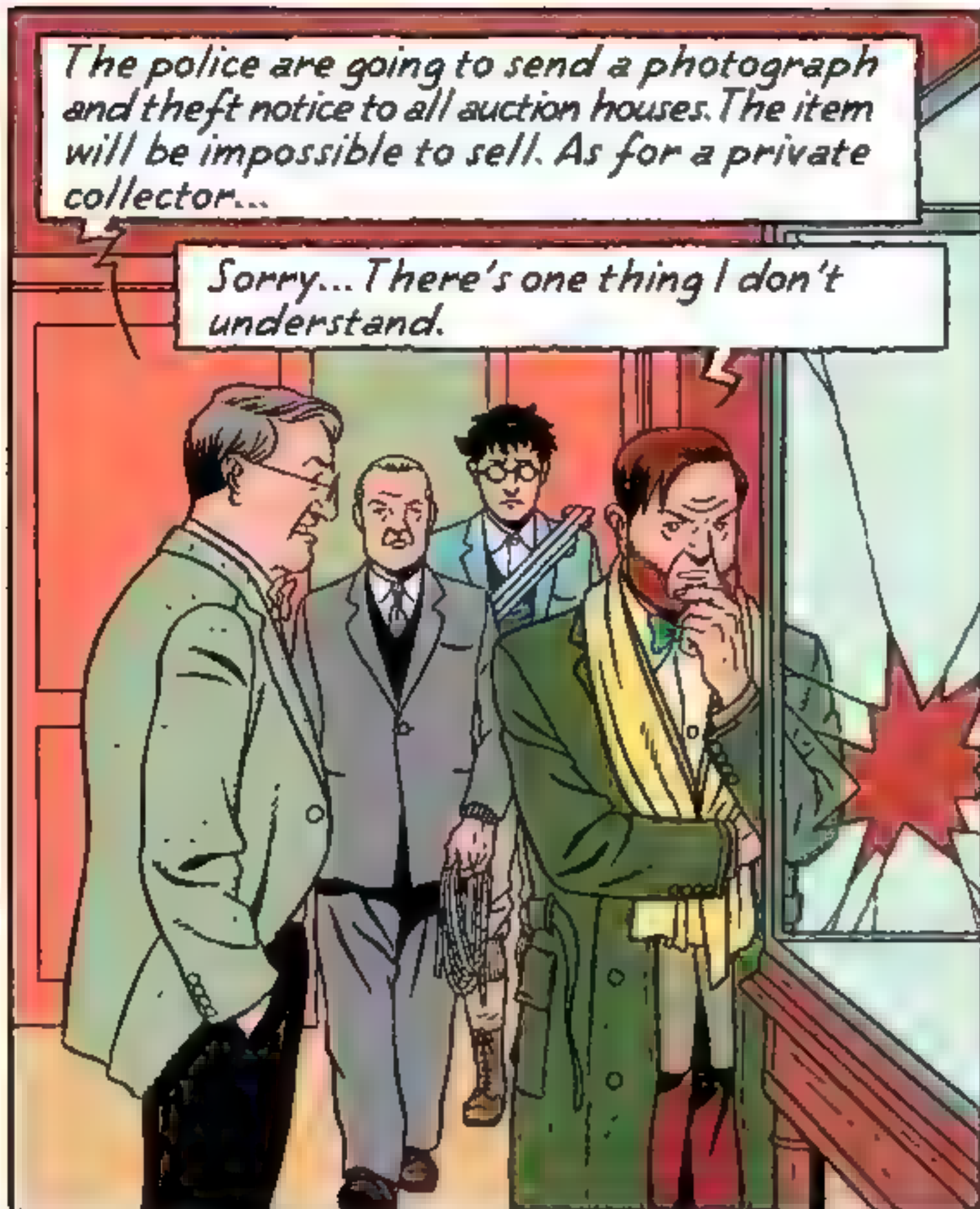
Forgive my curiosity but ... what was the stolen item? If the thief didn't bother taking anything else, I imagine it must have been particularly valuable?

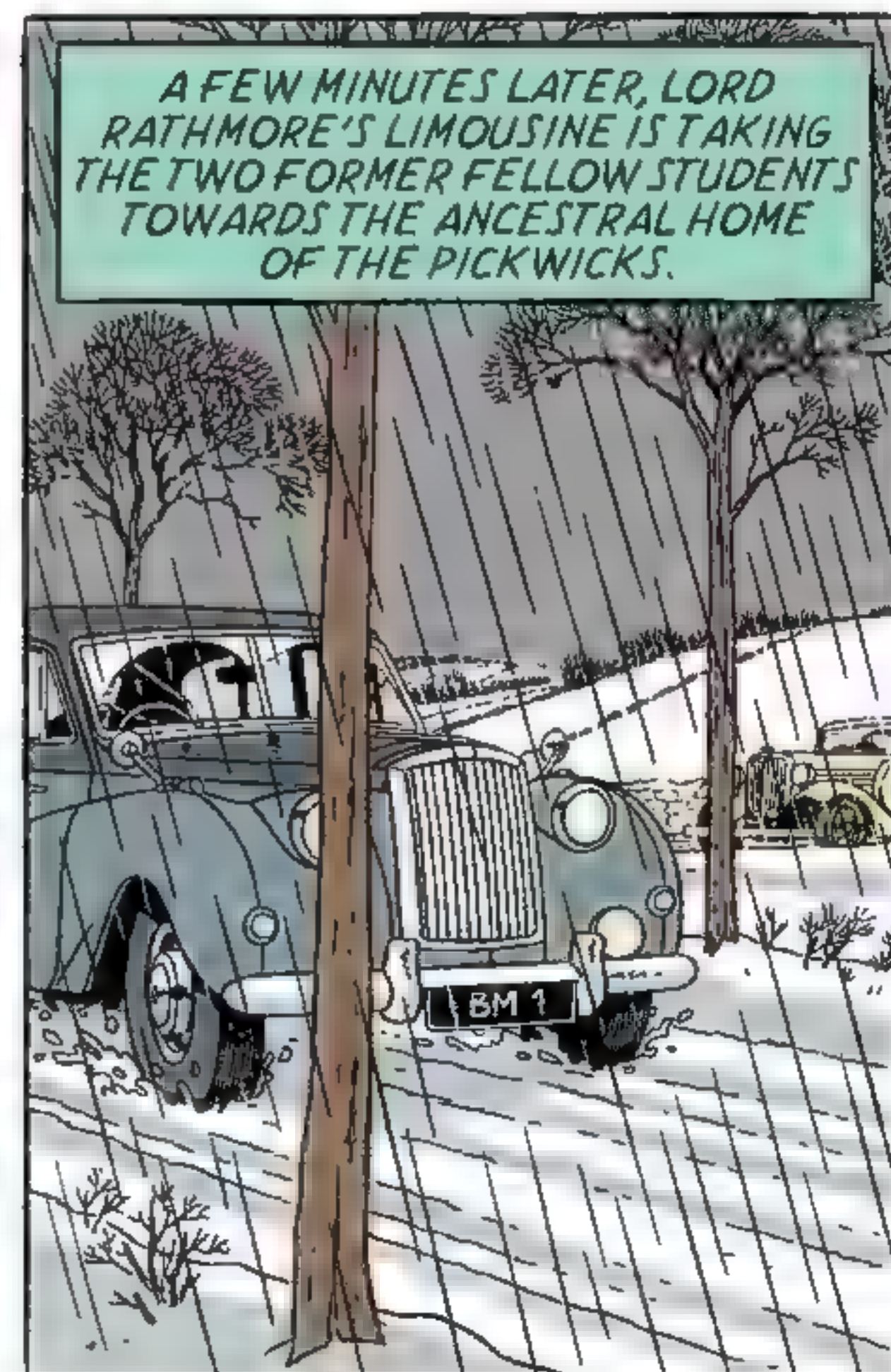
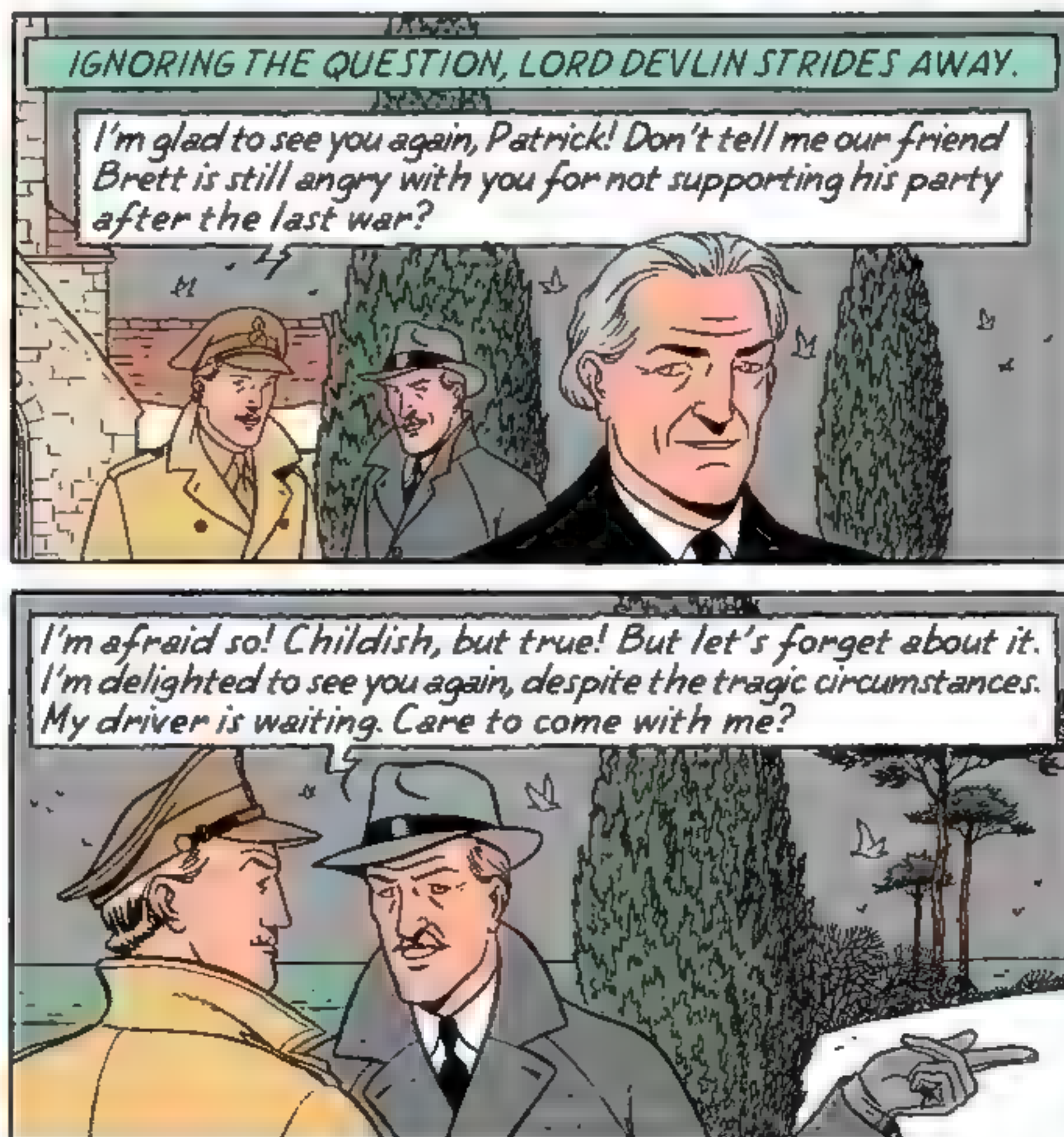
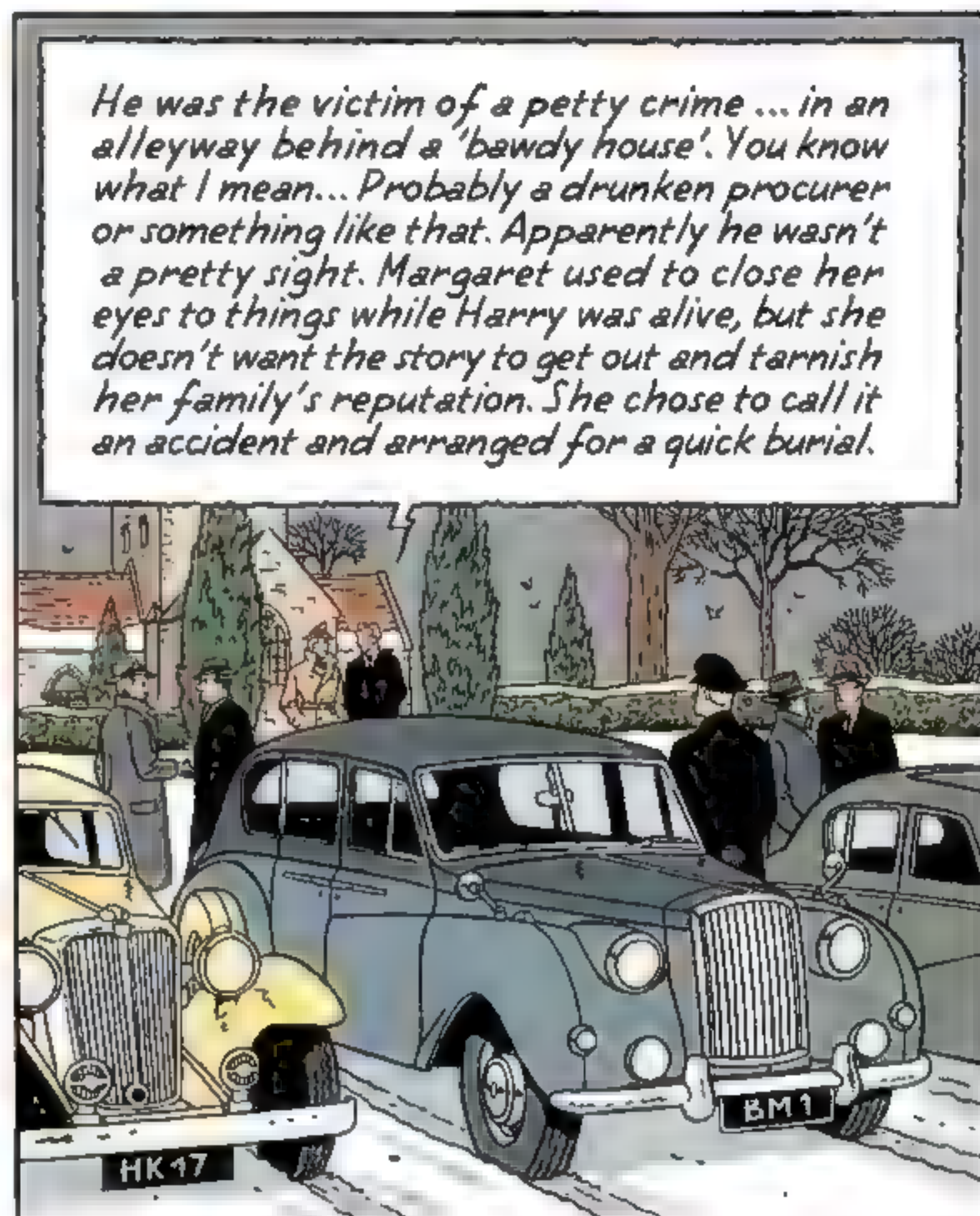
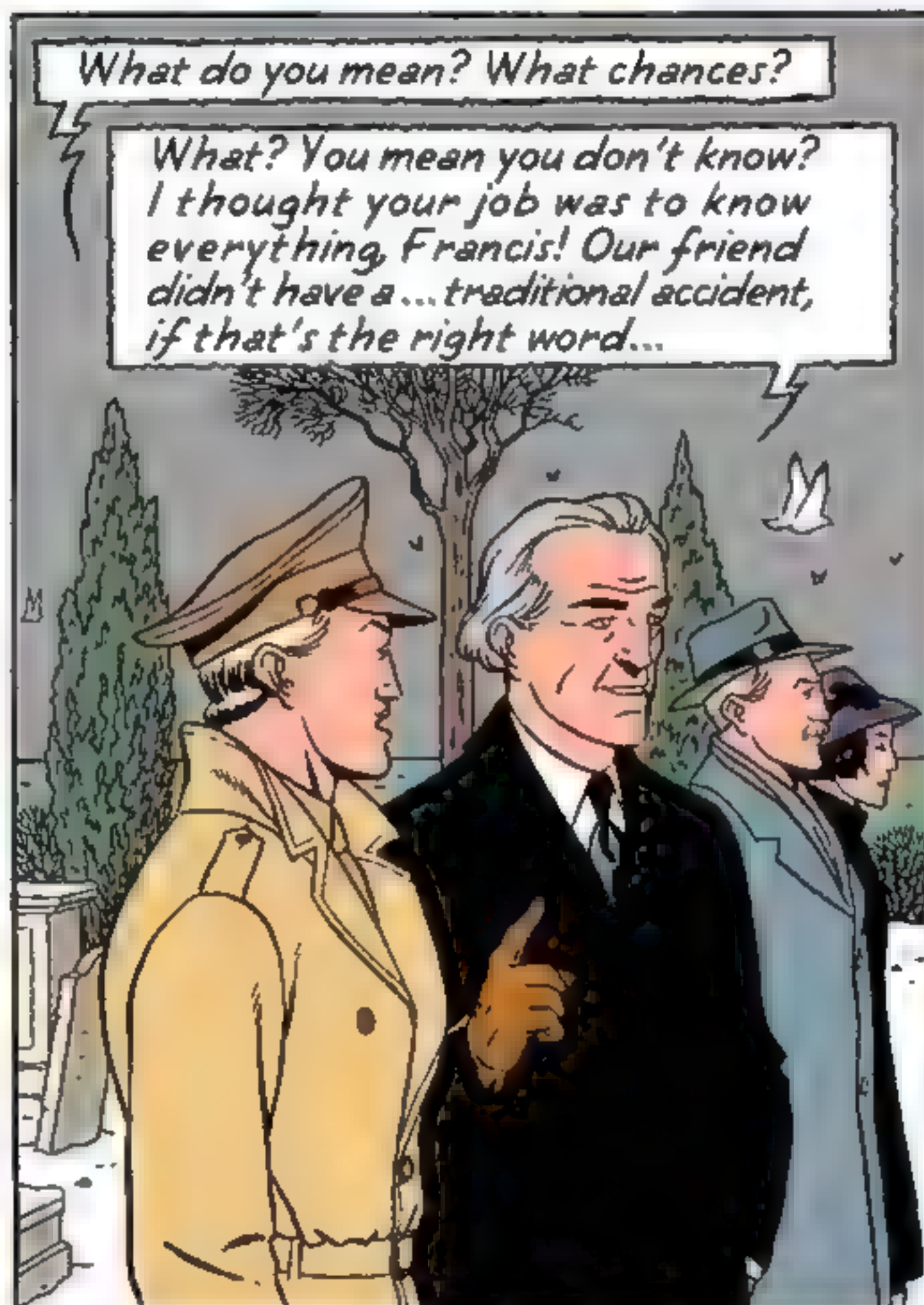
Valuable, yes, but no more than the other instruments on display here...

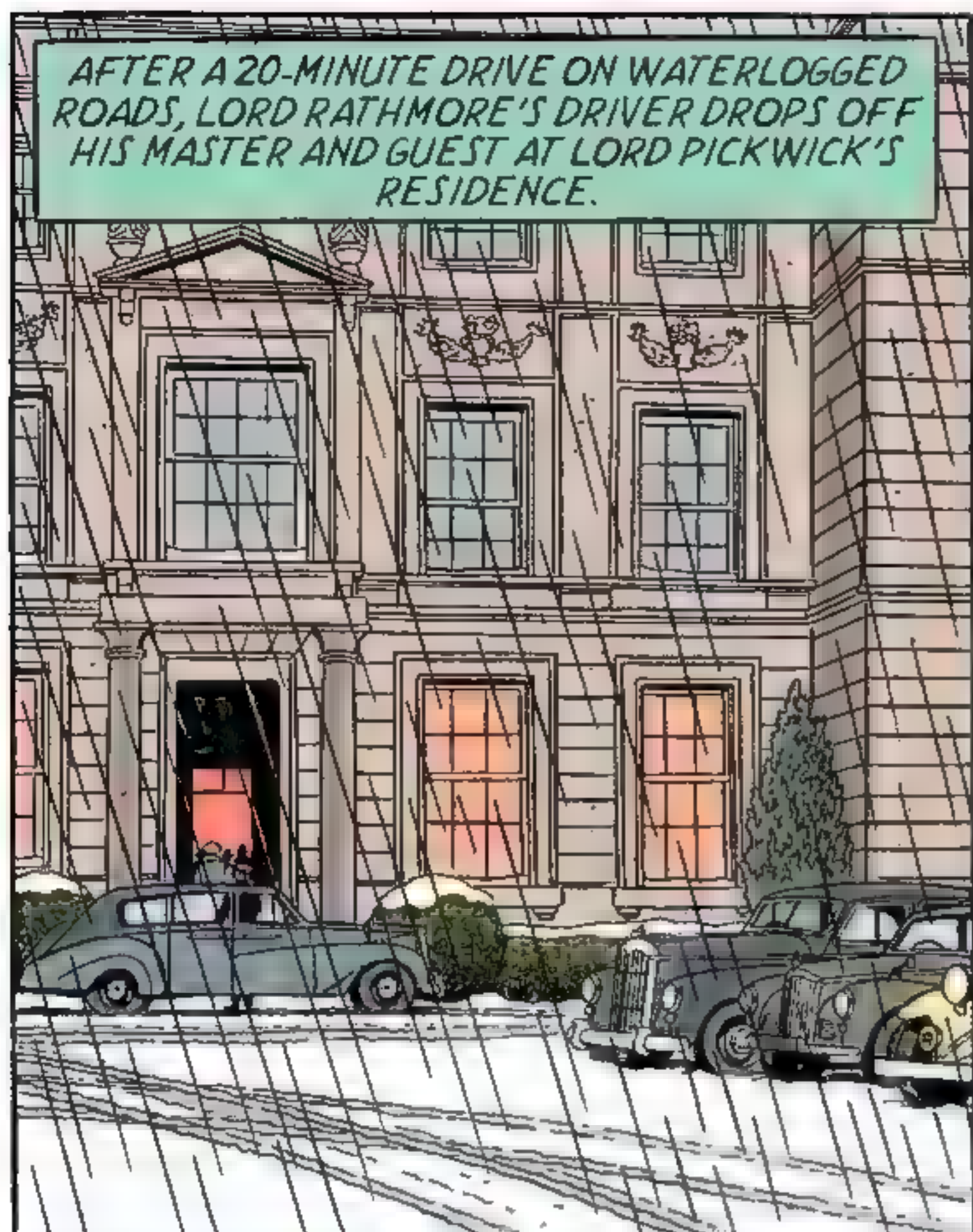


It was an antique violin, but over there is a Stradivarius worth an absolute fortune! If I'd been the thief, that would've been my obvious choice!

How strange...







AFTER A 20-MINUTE DRIVE ON WATERLOGGED ROADS, LORD RATHMORE'S DRIVER DROPS OFF HIS MASTER AND GUEST AT LORD PICKWICK'S RESIDENCE.

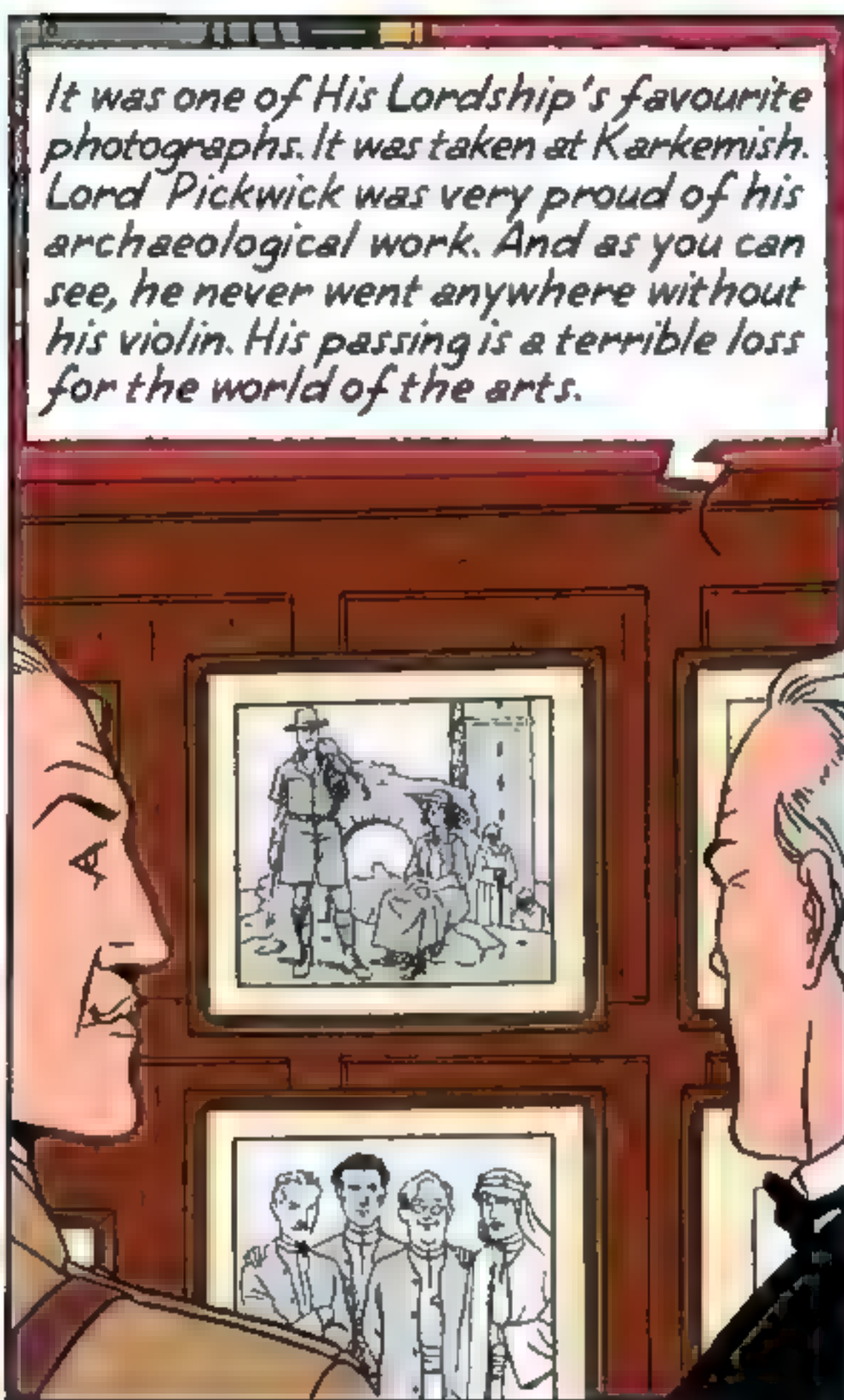
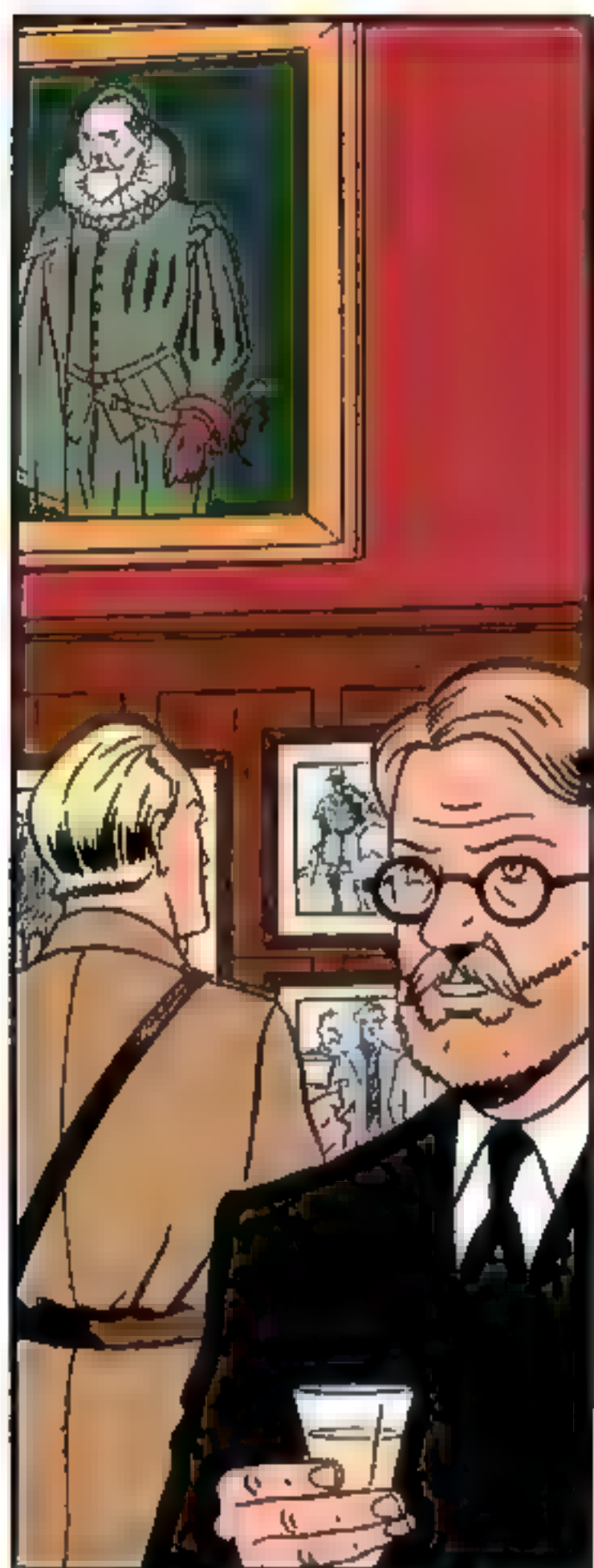


It's been too long since we last saw each other, Francis. Do stop by High Wycombe some time, for an evening like in the good old days.

Of course, with great pleasure, Patrick.



Good! I'm counting on you. Now, forgive me — in such circumstances, I must face certain social obligations. Until soon!



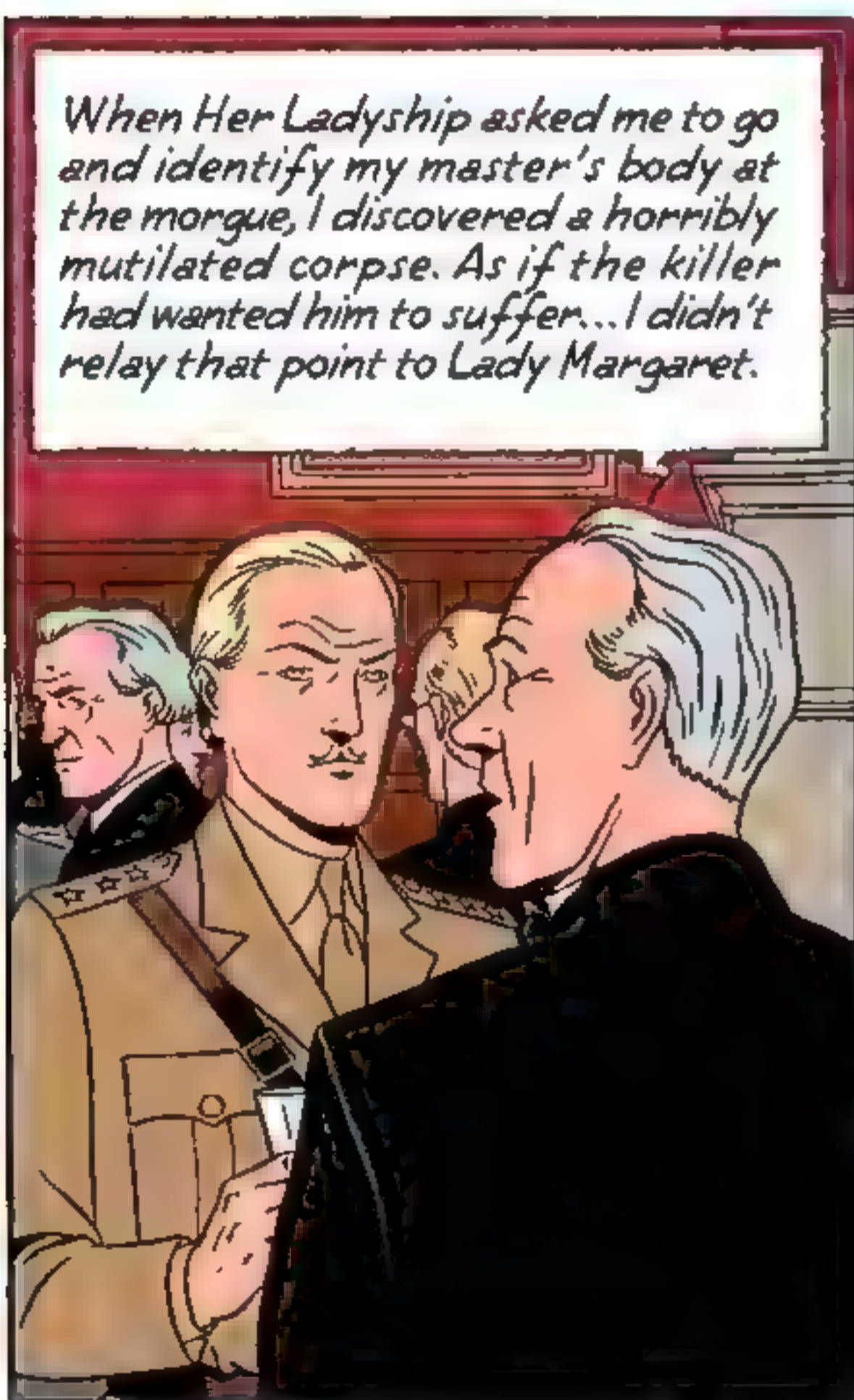
It was one of His Lordship's favourite photographs. It was taken at Karkemish. Lord Pickwick was very proud of his archaeological work. And as you can see, he never went anywhere without his violin. His passing is a terrible loss for the world of the arts.



I suppose you know that Lord Pickwick died in rather peculiar circumstances... Could you tell me more about that?



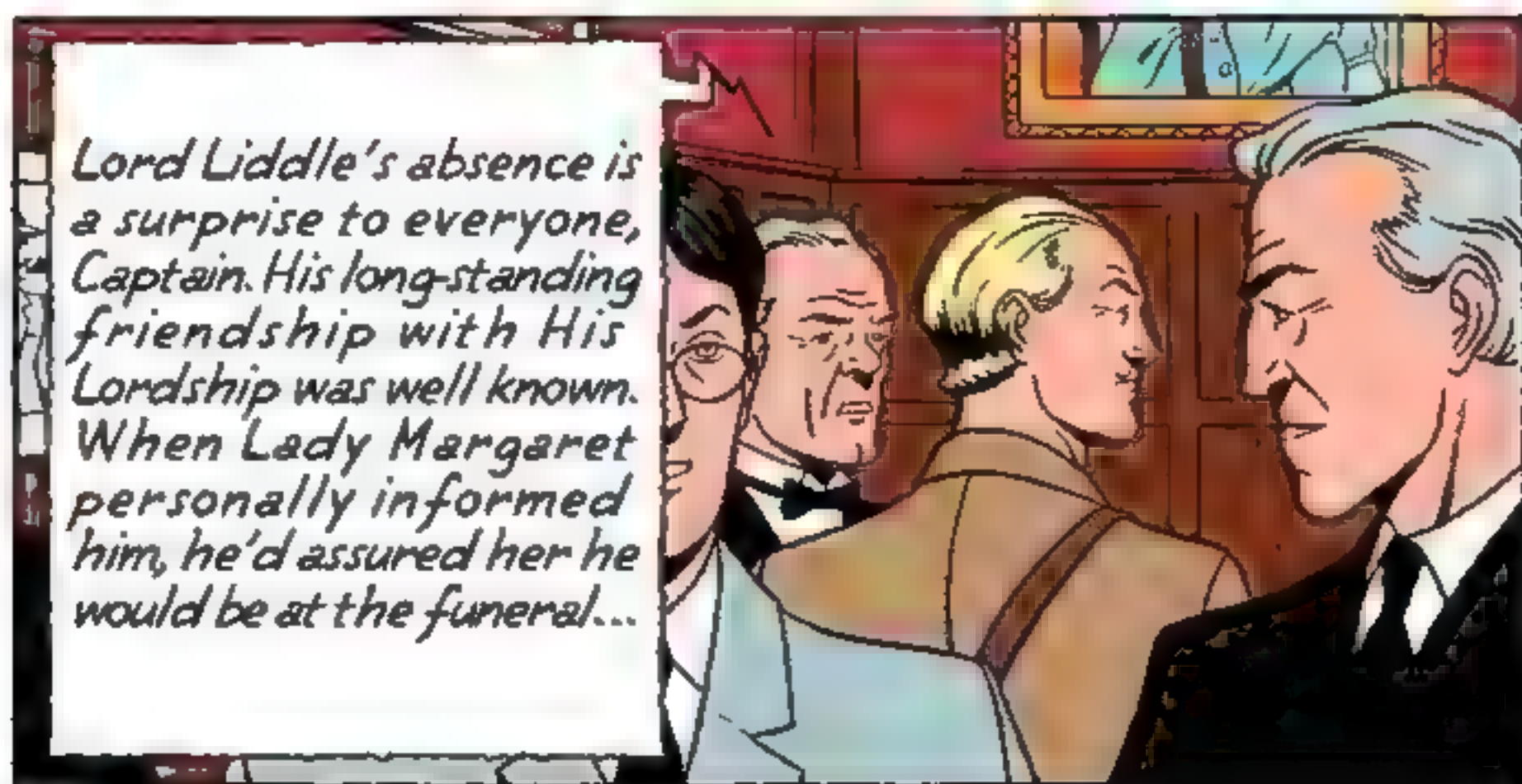
His Lordship had nothing but praise for you and your high deeds. I know I can trust you, Captain Blake...



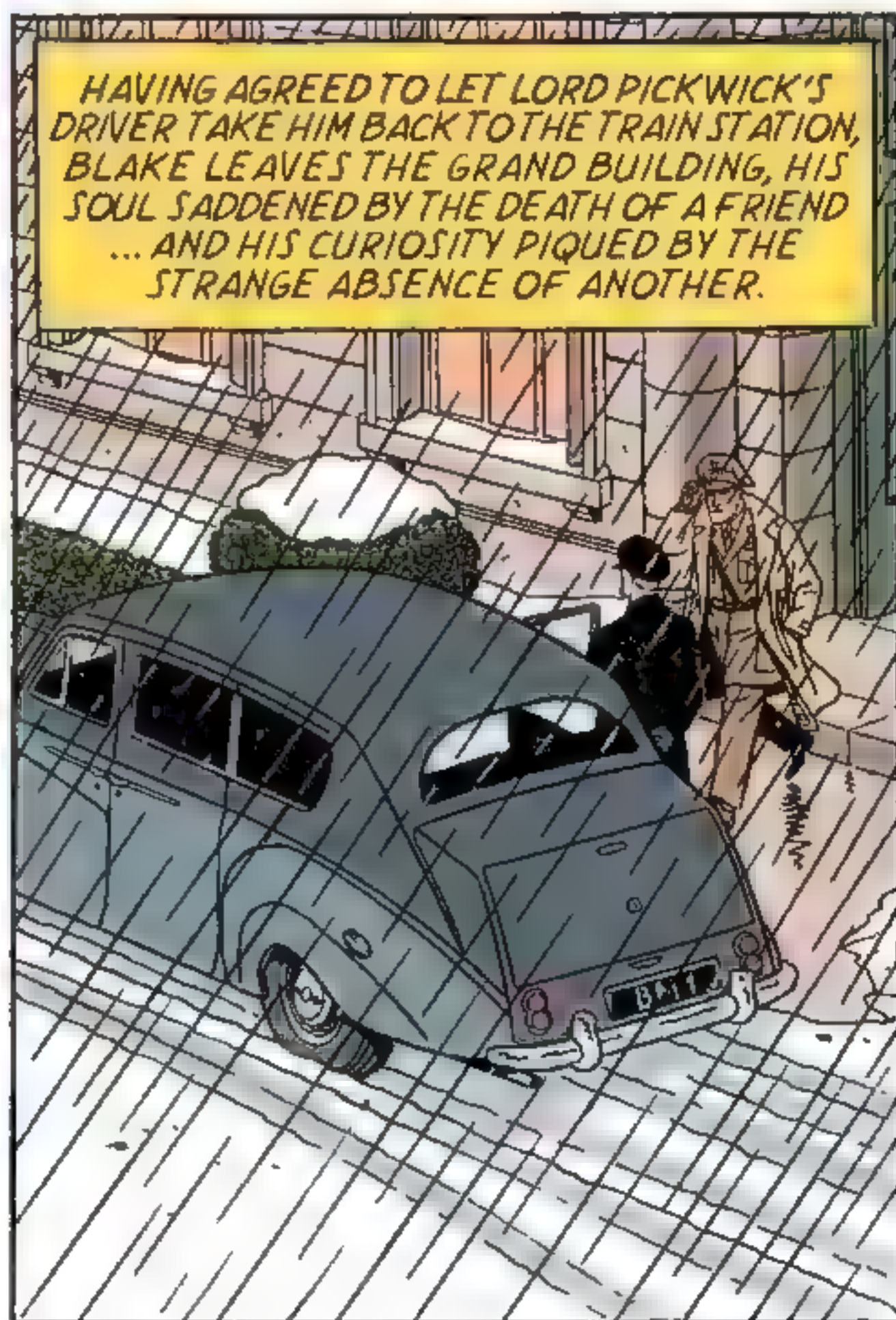
When Her Ladyship asked me to go and identify my master's body at the morgue, I discovered a horribly mutilated corpse. As if the killer had wanted him to suffer... I didn't relay that point to Lady Margaret.



I understand... One other thing. I don't see Lord Liddle... Do you know if he'd been informed of your master's passing?

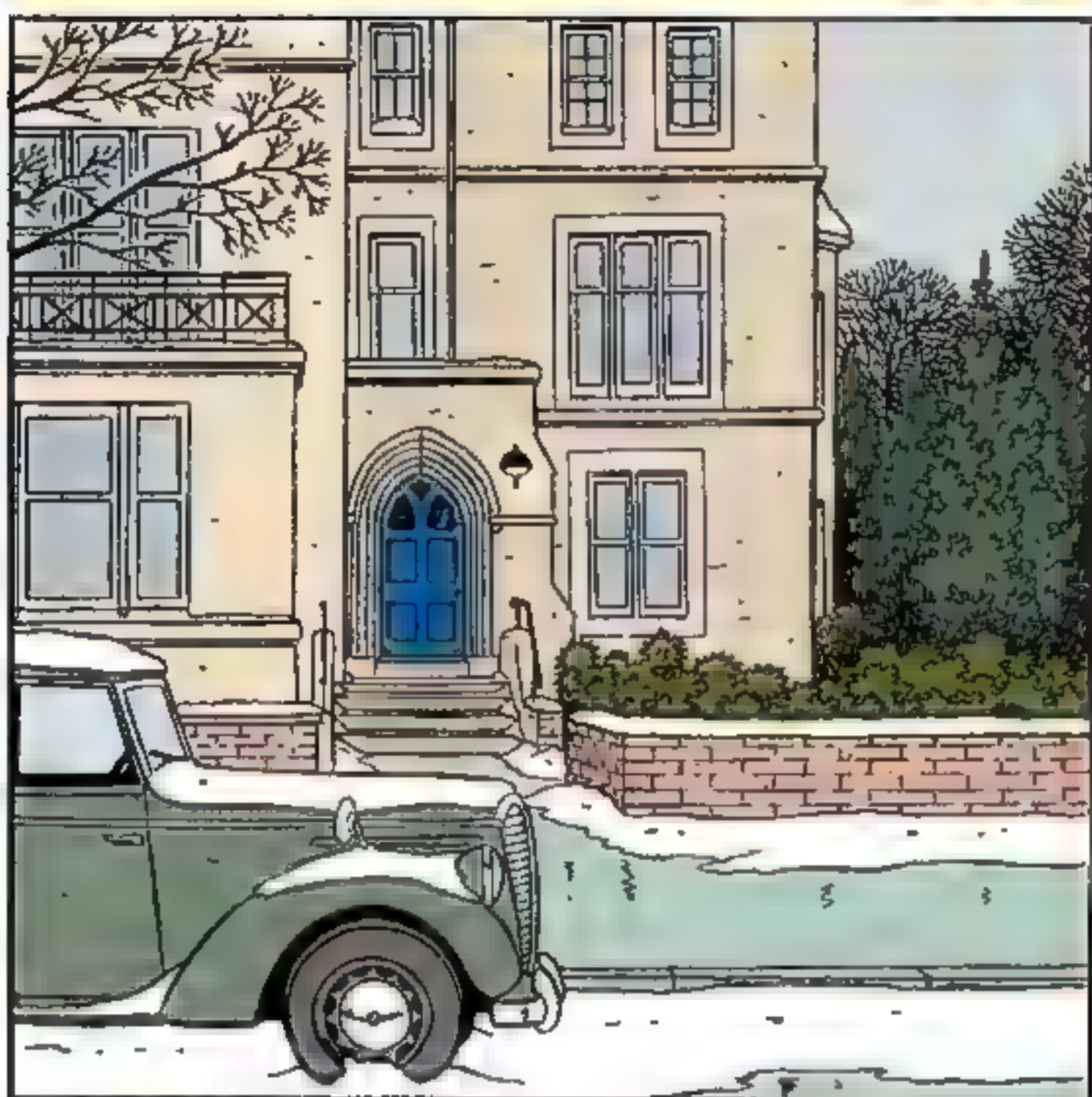


Lord Liddle's absence is a surprise to everyone, Captain. His long-standing friendship with His Lordship was well known. When Lady Margaret personally informed him, he'd assured her he would be at the funeral...



HAVING AGREED TO LET LORD PICKWICK'S DRIVER TAKE HIM BACK TO THE TRAIN STATION, BLAKE LEAVES THE GRAND BUILDING, HIS SOUL SADDENED BY THE DEATH OF A FRIEND ... AND HIS CURIOSITY PIQUED BY THE STRANGE ABSENCE OF ANOTHER.

AS THE AFTERNOON DRAWS TO A CLOSE, THE RAIN HAS STOPPED, BUT IMPOSING GREY CLOUDS STILL THREATEN IN THE SKY OVER OXFORD. AFTER LUNCH, THE KEEPER OF THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM HAS DRIVEN HIS GUEST TO A SMALL FLAT RESERVED FOR IMPORTANT GUESTS OF THE UNIVERSITY.



Hmm... No appointments before dinner. Philip, my boy, you should take advantage of this lull to visit the neighbourhood.



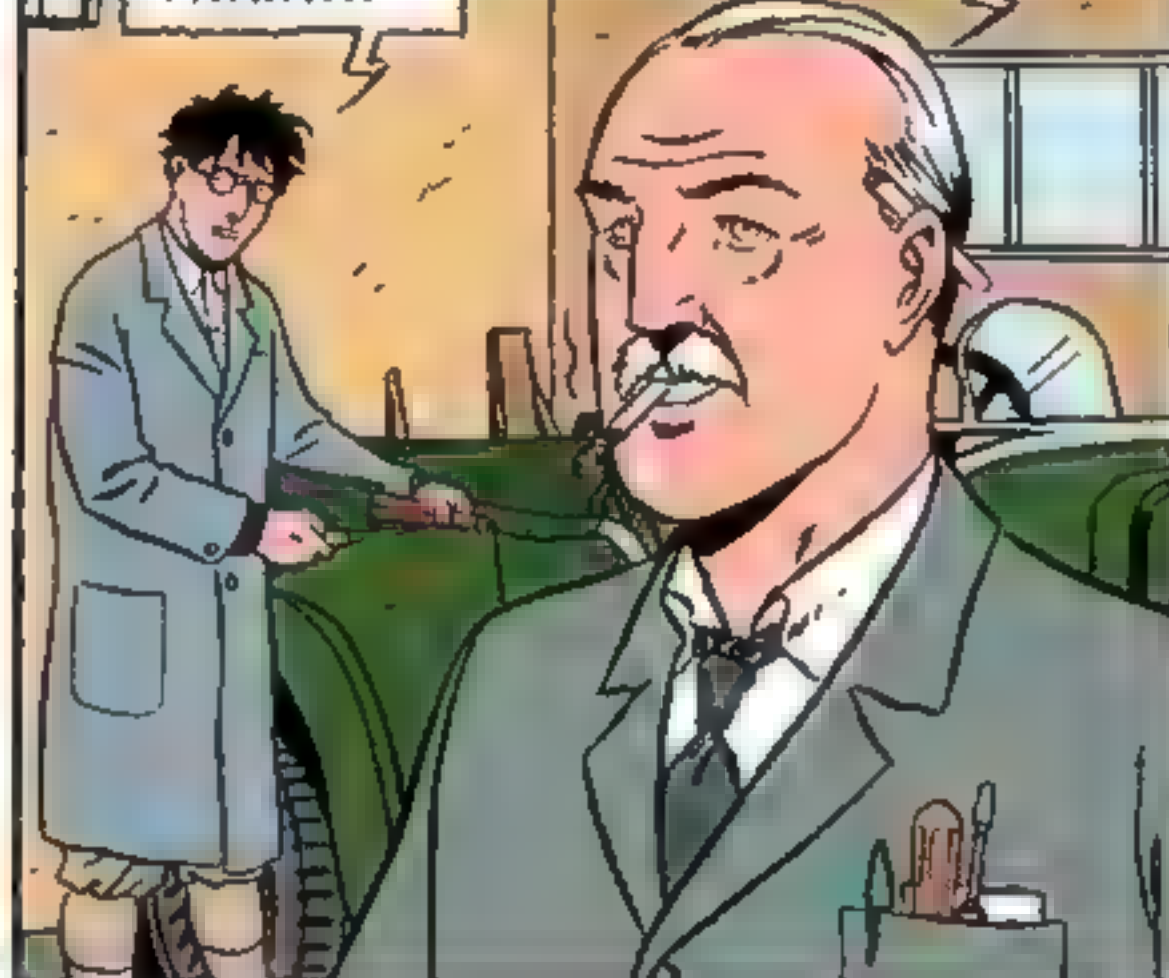
WALKING BEFORE AN OPEN GARAGE, MORTIMER RECOGNISES TWO OF THE MUSEUM'S EMPLOYEES.

Hello, gentlemen. Looks like I discovered your secret lair!



Precisely! This is where Alfred and I share our love of mechanics, when we have time. I have my old Jeep – the very same I used to drive around Makran during the last war. As for Alfred, he pampers his motorbike whenever he's not busy keeping Professor Higgins's Bentley alive. Afterwards we'll go to the pub for a Guinness. Isn't that right, Alfred?

Hmm...



Good evening to you, gentlemen ... and good Guinness!

Oh, Professor, would you have a minute?



About the cabinet that contains the keys to the museum's cases...

Yes? I'm listening...



The cabinet was indeed locked, and all the keys were inside. In future, if one of your theories were to call into question the reliability of my security work, I'd rather you spoke to me directly before going to Professor Higgins. I love my job, you understand?

Of course, Mr Taggart. I assure you I had no intention of causing you any trouble with that simple hypothesis.



FACED WITH THE SUPERVISOR'S SENSITIVITY, MORTIMER OPTS FOR A DIPLOMATIC RETREAT, BIDDING HIM FAREWELL AND CONTINUING HIS WALK WHILE AWAITING DINNER.



LATE THAT EVENING, TWO SHADOWS HURRY UNDER THE THICK SNOWFLAKES FALLING OVER LORD LIDDLE'S ESTATE NEAR AYLESBURY.



WITHOUT HESITATION, THE VISITORS OPEN A SERVICE DOOR.



HAVING LIT AN OIL LAMP WAITING FOR THEM AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS, THE INTRUDERS HEAD DOWN TO THE CELLARS...



...AND EVENTUALLY ENTER A WINE CELLAR, ONCE FAMOUS THROUGHOUT THE AREA, IN MORE AFFLUENT TIMES, FOR BEING FILLED WITH THE BEST FRENCH VINTAGES.



THIS IS WHERE THEY FIND THE UNFORTUNATE LORD LIDDLE AND THE ALREADY COLD CORPSE OF HIS BUTLER.

Please excuse us for making you wait the whole day in such an uncomfortable position...



To some extent it's your fault too! Everything could have been settled yesterday, if you'd given us the information we asked for. But no! You had to resist! Fortunately, we have a little more time ahead of us tonight...

No... No matter. I won't betray...



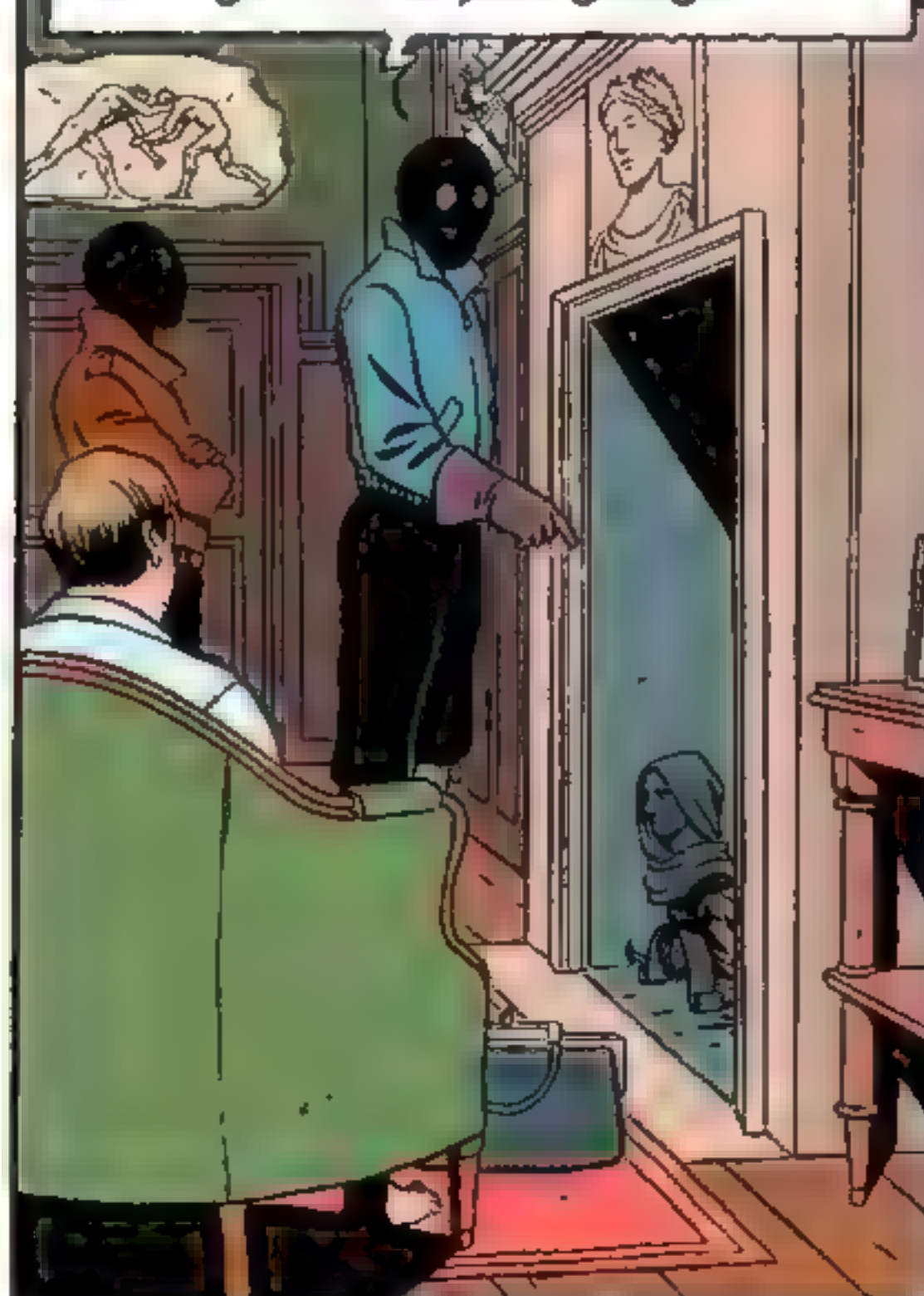
We'll see about that, My Lord. If you'd like to come with us... We'd be more comfortable in the sitting room...



A SHORT WHILE LATER, THE UNFORTUNATE PRISONER IS FORCEFULLY DRAGGED INTO HIS OWN SITTING ROOM.



I don't know if it's because you're short of money or just mean, but it's not very warm in your house. We'll get a nice fire going...



...and then we can return to yesterday's chat, with a few tools and the same questions: what object did you choose and, above all, where did you hide it?

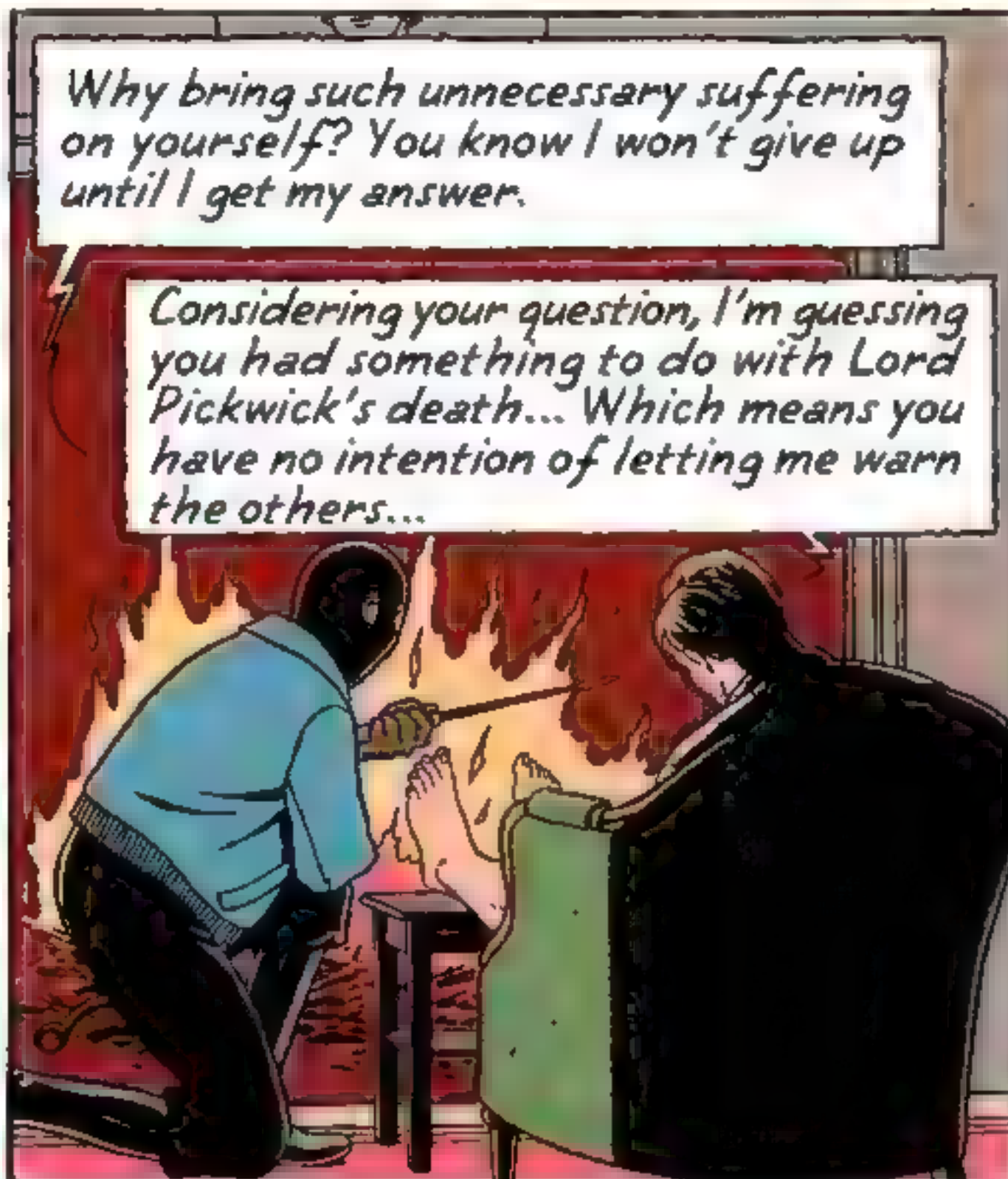


THE STILL-FALLING SNOW IS NOT ENOUGH TO MUFFLE THE HORRIBLE SCREAM THAT ESCAPES LORD LIDDLE. BUT THE PARK SURROUNDING HIS HOUSE IS TOO BIG FOR ANYONE TO HEAR.



Why bring such unnecessary suffering on yourself? You know I won't give up until I get my answer.

Considering your question, I'm guessing you had something to do with Lord Pickwick's death... Which means you have no intention of letting me warn the others...



Since I'm going to die anyway, I will endure this pain with one last satisfaction: that of witnessing the intensity of your frustration.



Raaaah! Every man's endurance has limits, Liddle! You'll talk, believe me!

That may not be necessary...



This picture was taken at a Greek site... It's placed between the one of Lawrence and that of his three friends. I bet it's that vase... What do you say, Liddle?



...and let Lord Brian Liddle repent for his past sins before the cleansing fire takes him and his miserable manor.

No! Monsters! You can't...



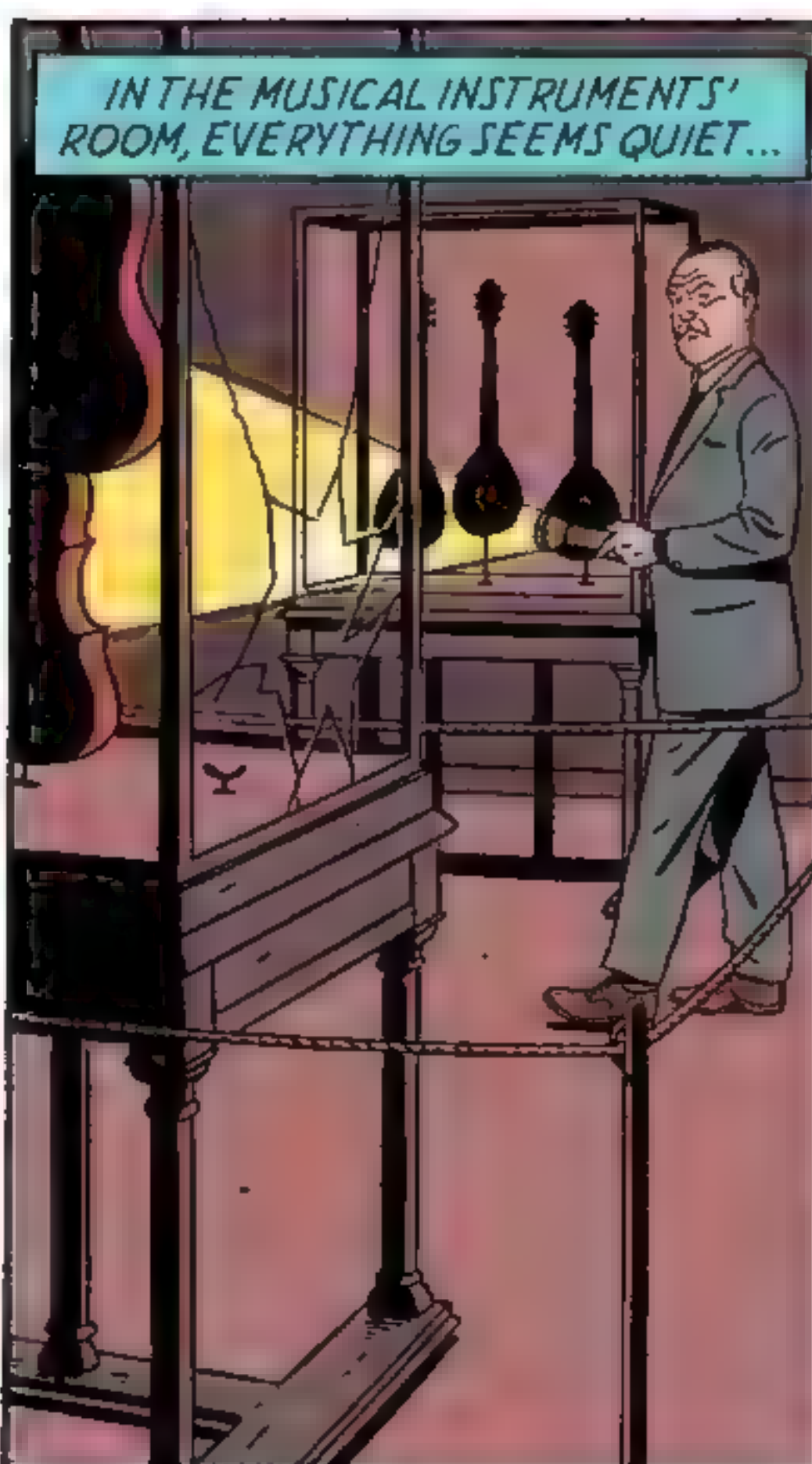
His expression says it all! I think we can go...



TWO HOURS LATER, IN OXFORD...



IN THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS' ROOM, EVERYTHING SEEMS QUIET...



...UNTIL A SHATTERING NOISE INTERRUPTS THE GUARD'S ROUNDS.





Oh, you devil! You shouldn't have come back!...



Stop! Stop or I'll shoot!



BANG
BANG



Stop! This time, I won't...



What?!...



...He ... He's crazy! From this height, he'll...

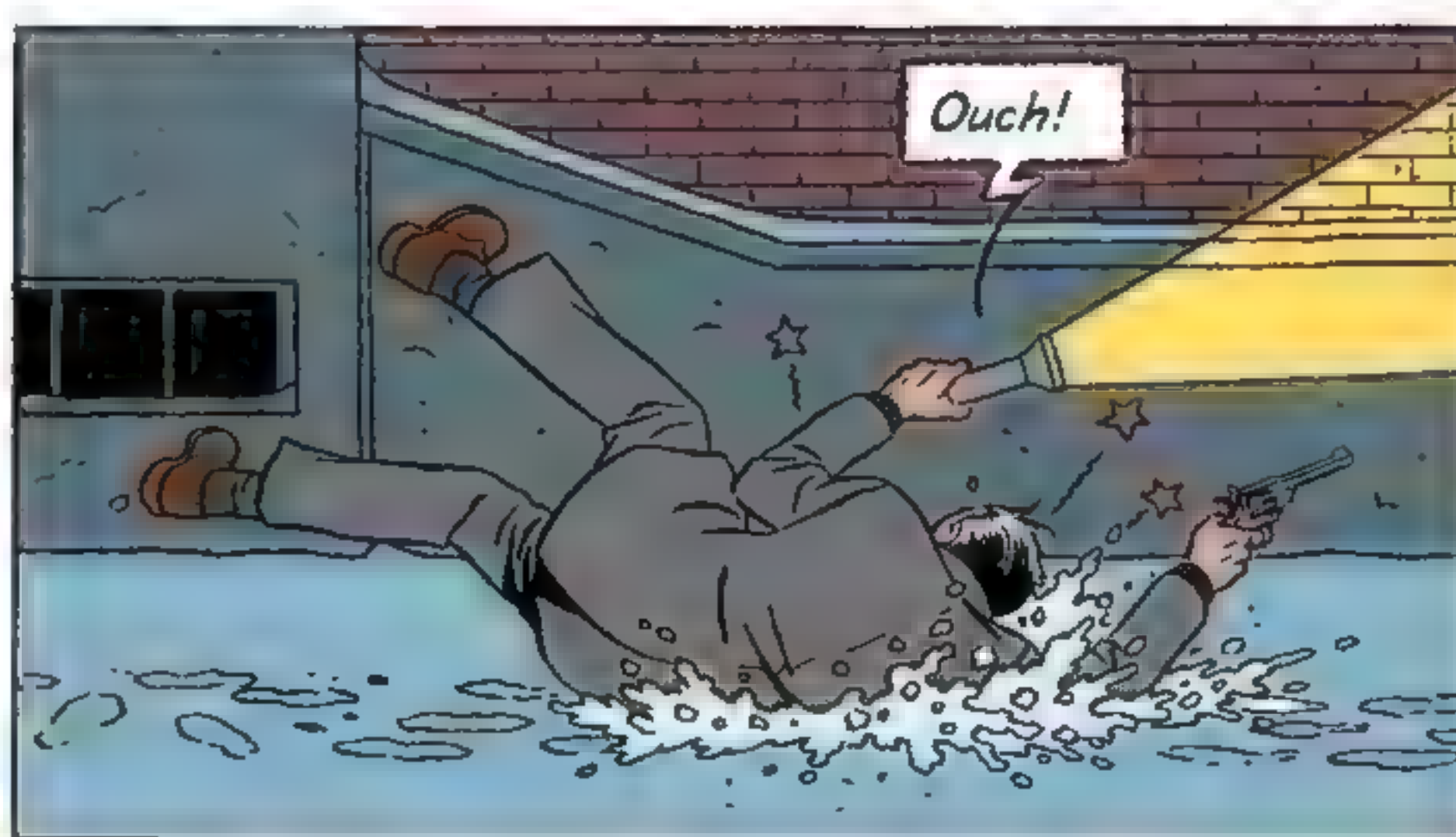


Ha! Ha! Ha! See you again, watchman!

?!



STUNG BY THE THIEF'S FEAT AND MOCKING LAUGHTER, THE FORMER COMMANDO FOLLOWS SUIT AND JUMPS FROM THE WINDOW...



Ouch!



You asked for it, you swine!



Oww!

THE NEXT DAY AT DAWN, THE SOUND OF THE PHONE RINGING HAS AWAKENED PROFESSOR MORTIMER...

What!?... I'll be right there!

LESS THAN TEN MINUTES LATER, HE RUSHES OUT OF THE BUILDING WHERE HIS STUDIO IS LOCATED AND HEADS TOWARDS THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM...

...WHERE A GUARD TELLS HIM HE'S EXPECTED ON THE FIRST FLOOR.

Can you believe it?! Two burglaries in two days! The nerve! This time the thief even broke a piece of pottery! No respect! Not to mention the aggression our guard suffered. We must...

Compose yourself, dear fellow. Let's try to look at the facts calmly.

AT THE REQUEST OF THE KEEPER, TAGGART ONCE AGAIN RECOUNTS HIS NIGHTLY MISADVENTURE FOR MORTIMER.

...And if an accomplice hadn't knocked me out from behind, I guarantee I'd have filled his legs with lead and stopped him cold!

Come now, Mac! You took too many risks! You're no longer a soldier, for heaven's sake!

The thing is, if this is the same thief, he changed his mode of operation. This time, the lock was well and truly forced.

Ah! You see! So he didn't have the key!

And was a more valuable item stolen?

Well... no. It was a Greek vase, not a particularly rare one either. And it will be almost impossible to sell on the open market too. Our thief's choices are strange...

...but must correspond with specific criteria, even if their logic still escapes us.

What about you, Alfred? Did you see or hear anything unusual last night?

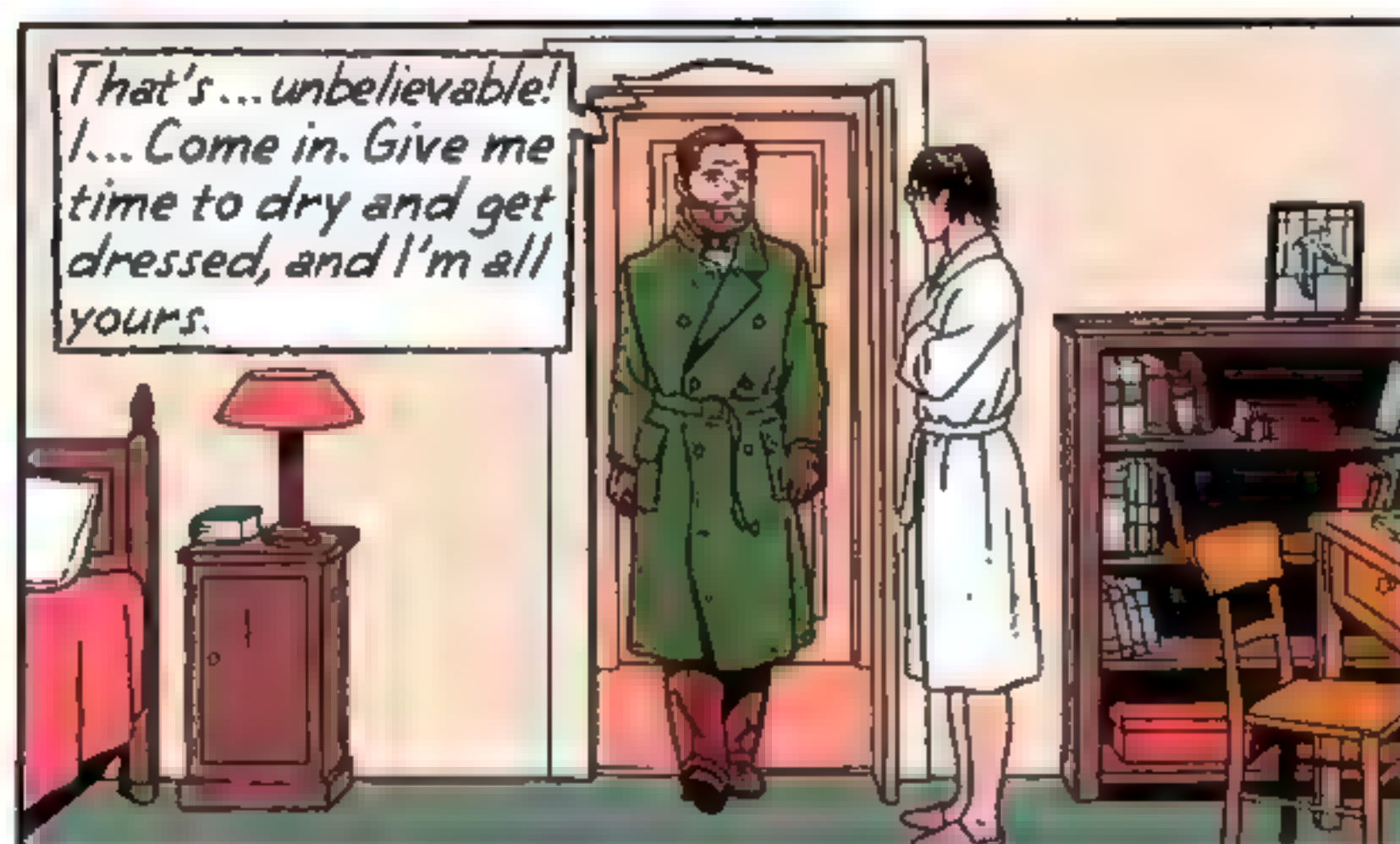
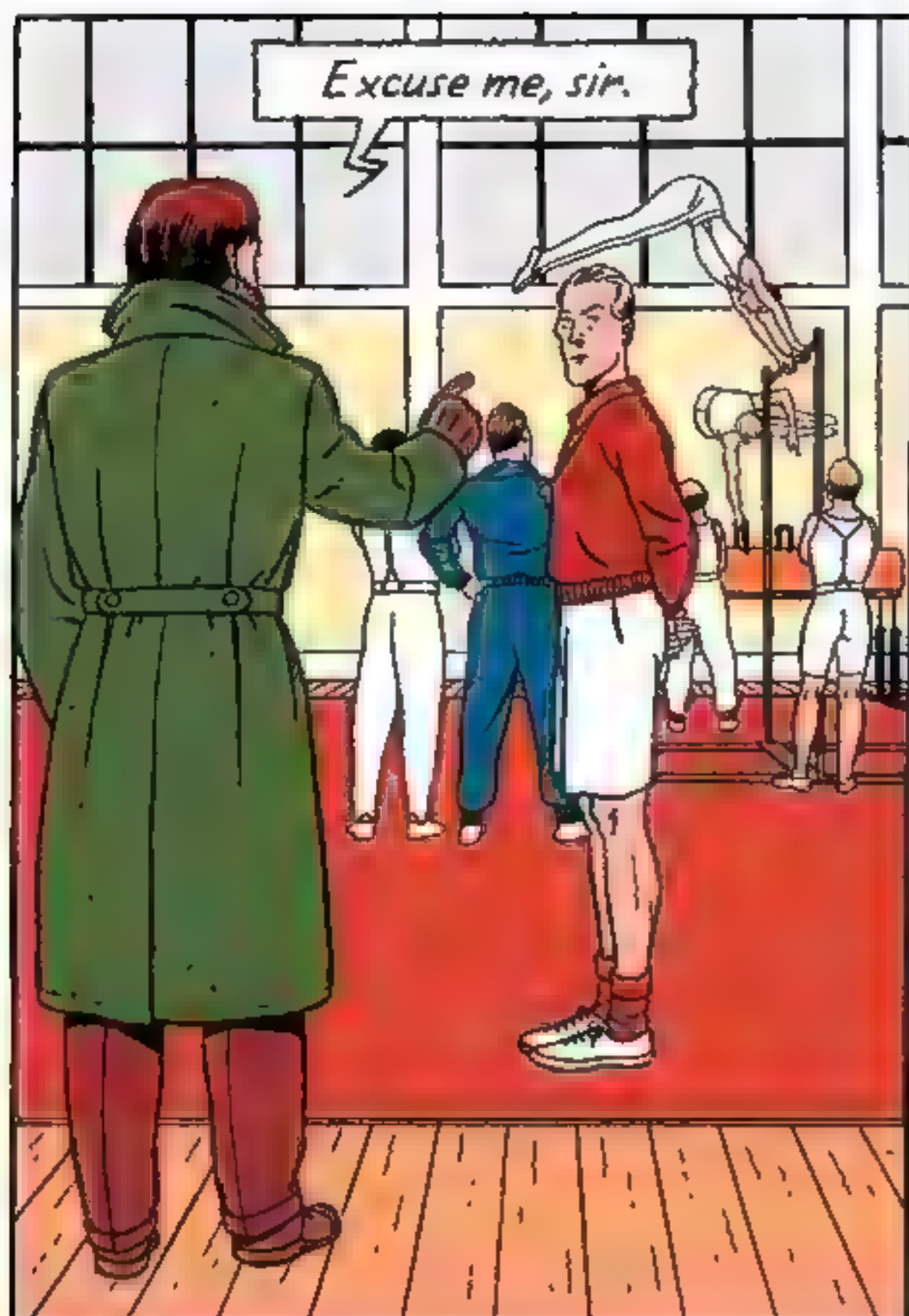
No, didn't see anything... But Mr Taggart saw the ghost too! I'm scared! I don't want to sleep here any more! Don't want...

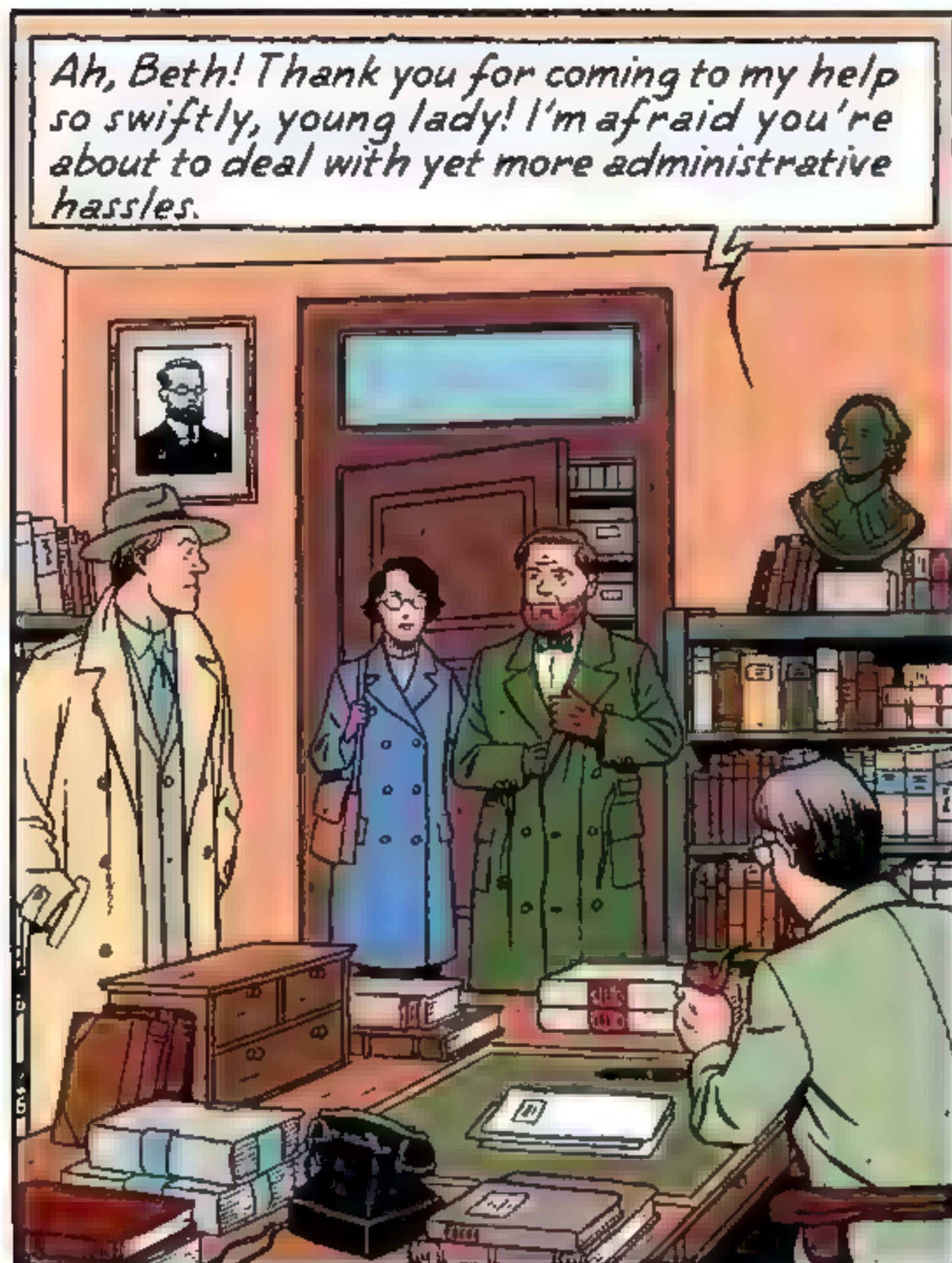
Now, now, Alfred. You're in no danger. Come on, let's go check on our machines, all right?

Poor Alfred... Could you go and get Beth, Professor? She can comfort him ... and I'm going to need her to fill in the theft statement and insurance paperwork.

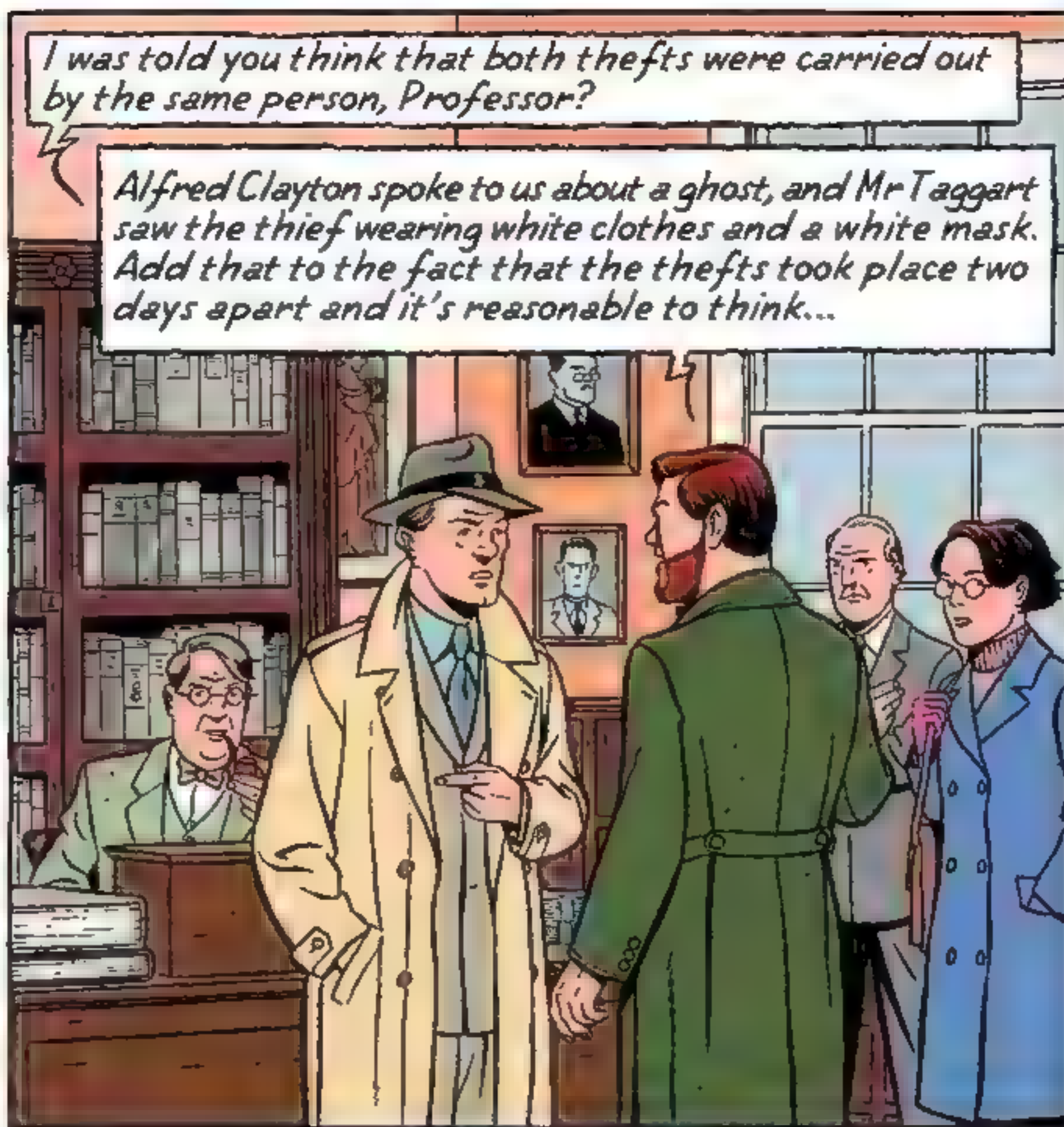
Of course. Where can I find her?

HAVING RECEIVED DIRECTIONS FROM THE KEEPER, MORTIMER HEADS FOR THE GYMNASIUM WHERE BETH IS TAKING HER WEEKLY GYMNASTICS CLASS.





Ah, Beth! Thank you for coming to my help so swiftly, young lady! I'm afraid you're about to deal with yet more administrative hassles.



I was told you think that both thefts were carried out by the same person, Professor?

Alfred Clayton spoke to us about a ghost, and Mr Taggart saw the thief wearing white clothes and a white mask. Add that to the fact that the thefts took place two days apart and it's reasonable to think...



Undoubtedly, undoubtedly... But then why not open the cases in the same way and take both items on the same night?



Miss Pembrey has already made the same point, Chief Inspector. I admit I have no answers for the time being.

Well... Our officers are trained in such matters and will soon have this mystery solved, you can be sure of it.



Erm... Of course, I have complete confidence in the abilities of the Oxford constabulary, Inspector. However, I wonder if you'd object to my mentioning this affair to my friend Captain Francis Blake, head of M15? His opinion could prove useful...



I can promise you that my men will deal with this case quickly. But if you wish to inform your friend, I cannot prevent you from doing so, of course. Good day, miss, gentlemen.



I'm afraid we may have somewhat upset Chief Inspector Rush, my friends...



The only thing that matters is getting quick results. I had the privilege of serving in the Makran secret base* during the last war. I know Captain Blake's valour. If he agrees to help us with this investigation, I say we'd be mad to refuse!



Any extra help is welcome, I suppose...

We're agreed, then. Please, Professor, my telephone is yours!



If you don't mind, Professor, I'm going to go and comfort Alfred before I fill in the insurance forms. After that I promised John I'd go with him and...

That's quite all right, my dear, enjoy the day. There's nothing else to do for the moment, anyway.

Hello?



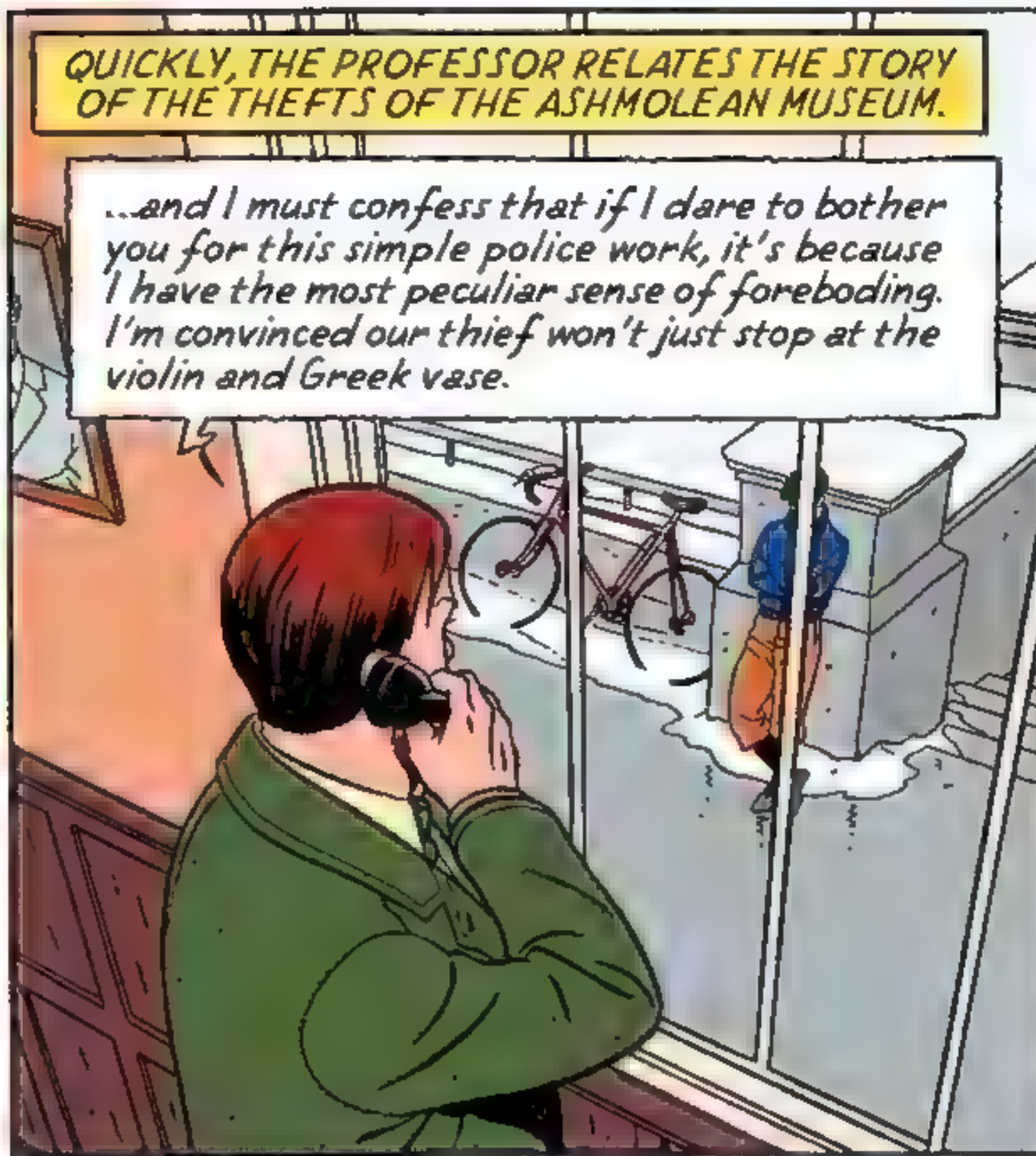
...Captain Blake at Scotland Yard. That's right!... Yes, miss, I'll wait...



You can transfer the call now. Thank you, miss...



Hello, Philip? To what do I owe the pleasure of this early call, old chap?



QUICKLY, THE PROFESSOR RELATES THE STORY OF THE THEFTS OF THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM.

...and I must confess that if I dare to bother you for this simple police work, it's because I have the most peculiar sense of foreboding. I'm convinced our thief won't just stop at the violin and Greek vase.



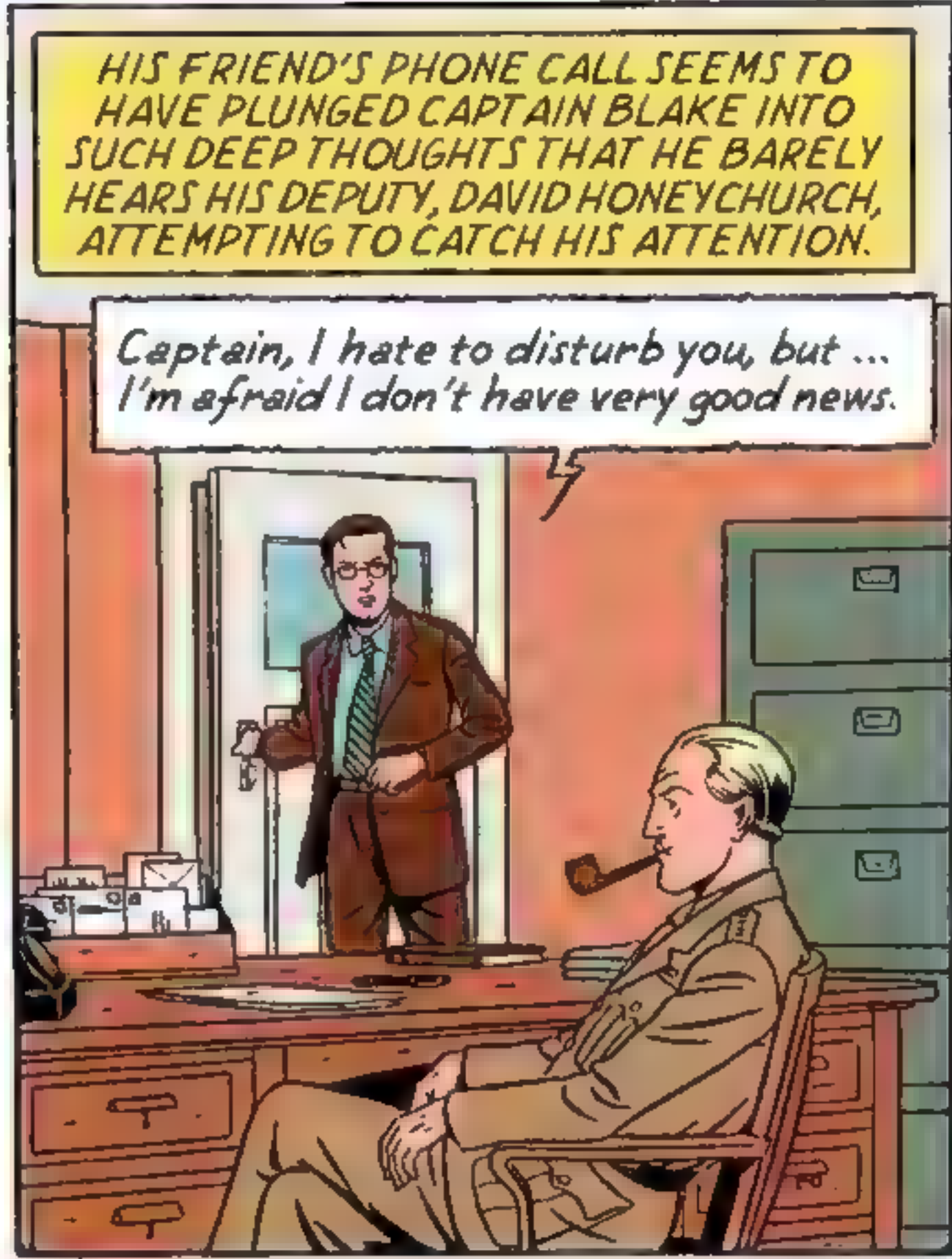
Hello?... Francis? Are you still there?



Yes, yes. My apologies... You were right to call me. The situation is rather... worrisome indeed. I'm going to release myself from current affairs and join you in Oxford as soon as possible. Give me a number where I can call you...



Two thefts at the Ashmolean and a murdered lord... Could it be...?



HIS FRIEND'S PHONE CALL SEEMS TO HAVE PLUNGED CAPTAIN BLAKE INTO SUCH DEEP THOUGHTS THAT HE BARELY HEARS HIS DEPUTY, DAVID HONEYCHURCH, ATTEMPTING TO CATCH HIS ATTENTION.

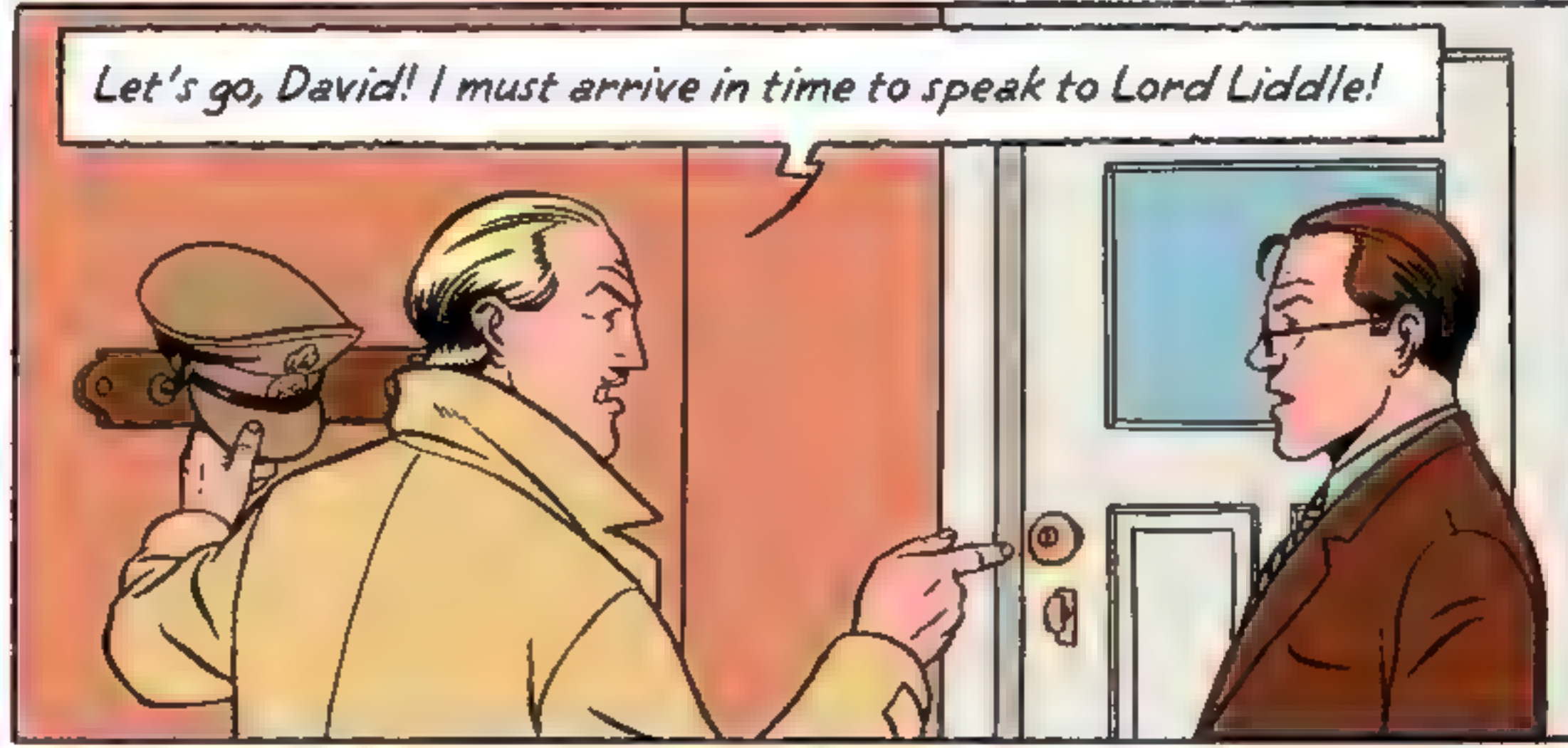
Captain, I hate to disturb you, but ... I'm afraid I don't have very good news.



Lord Brian Liddle has been found on the brink of death in the charred ruins of his home. The hospital in Aylesbury just called. They said Lord Liddle is asking for Francis Blake of M15 and it's essential to get there quickly, as he won't last for much longer.



Good heavens! There's no doubt now!



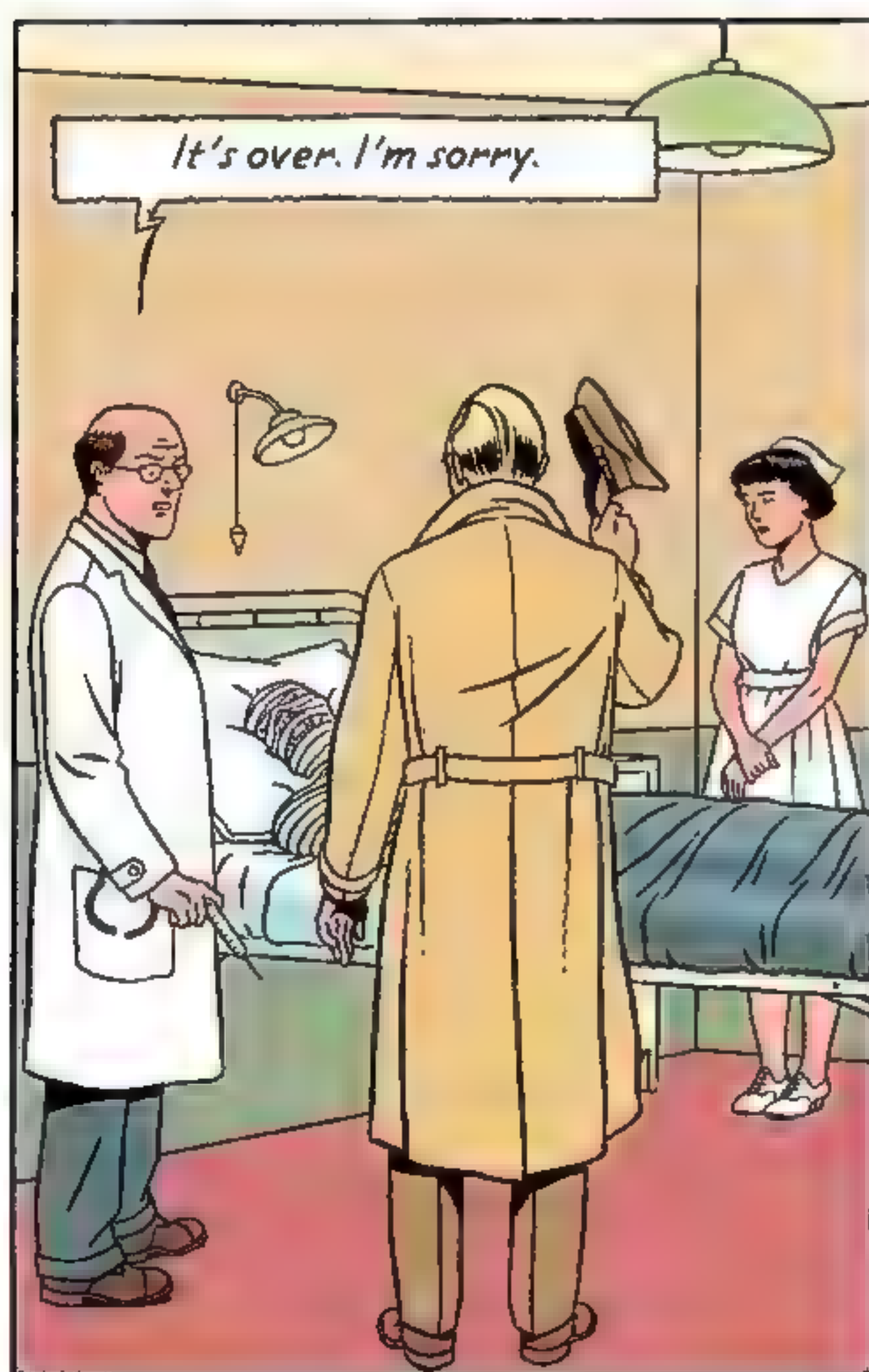
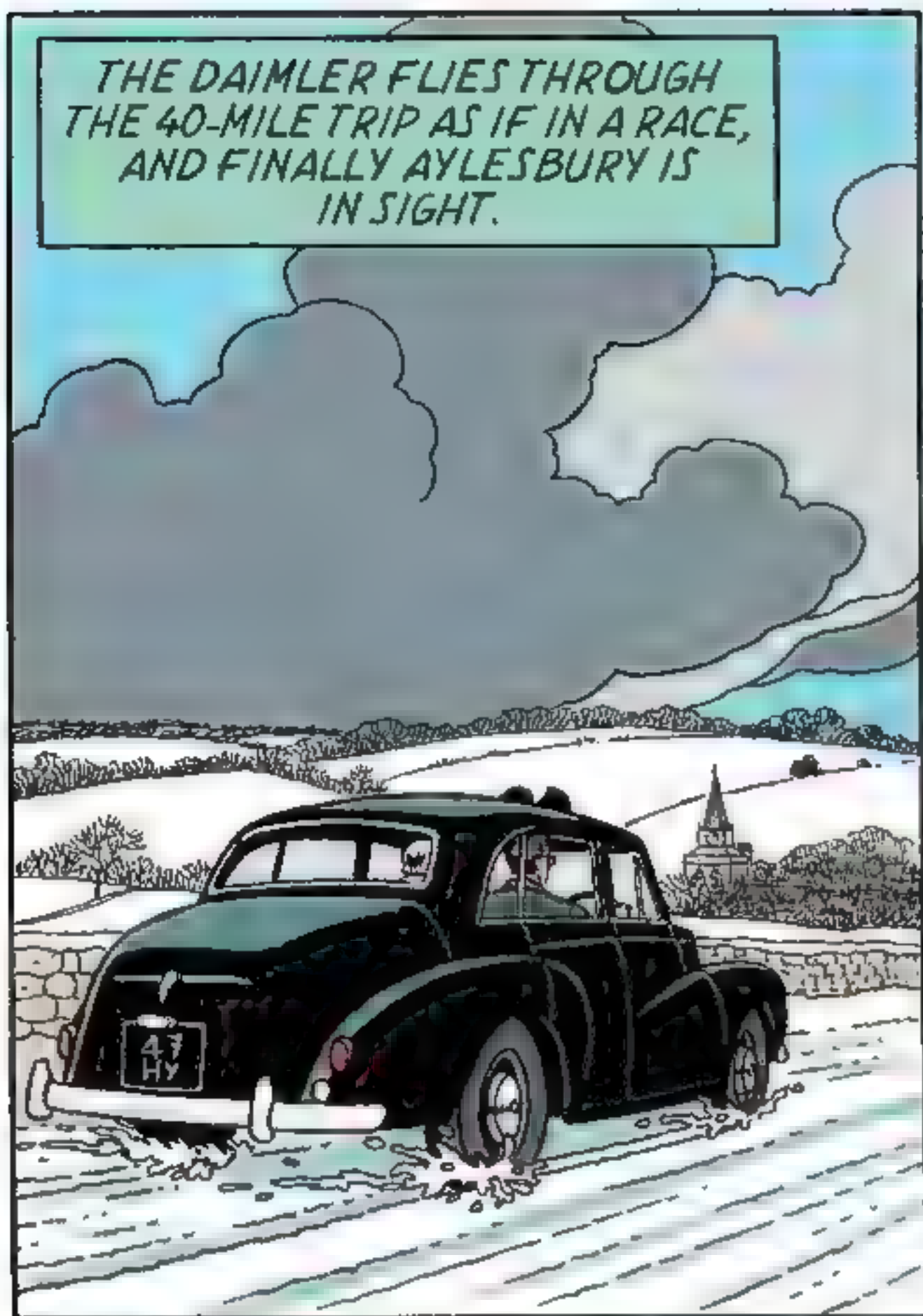
Let's go, David! I must arrive in time to speak to Lord Liddle!

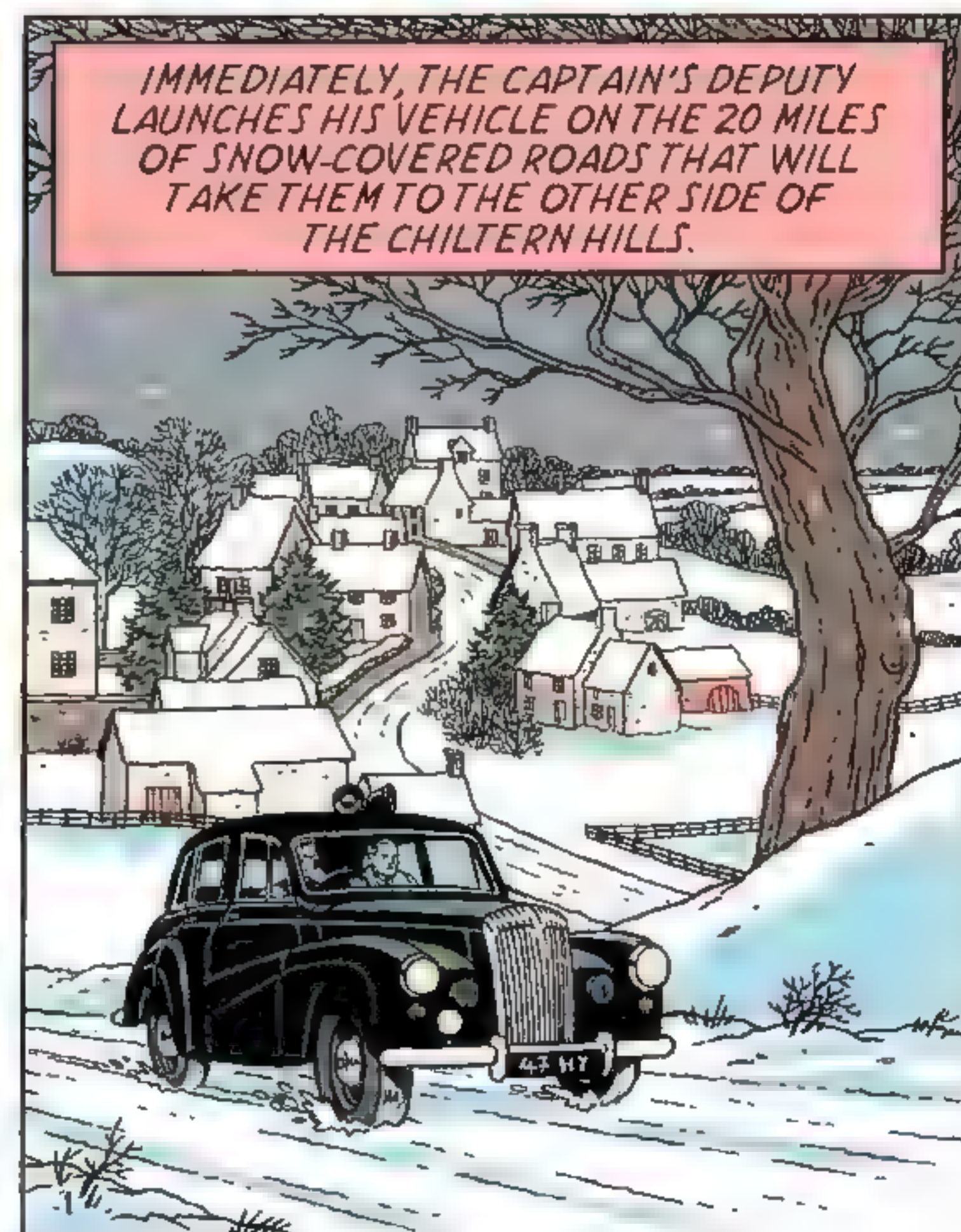
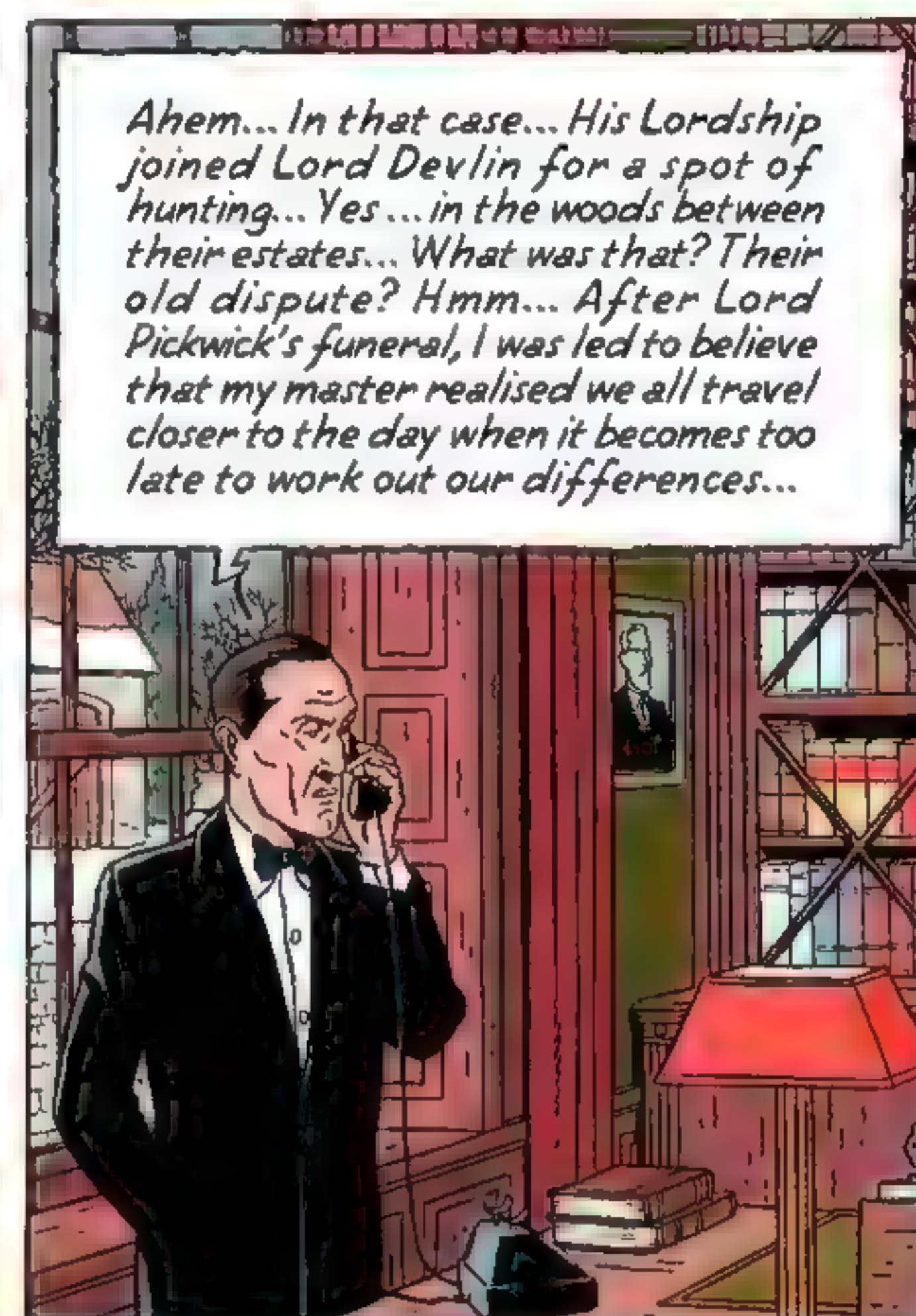


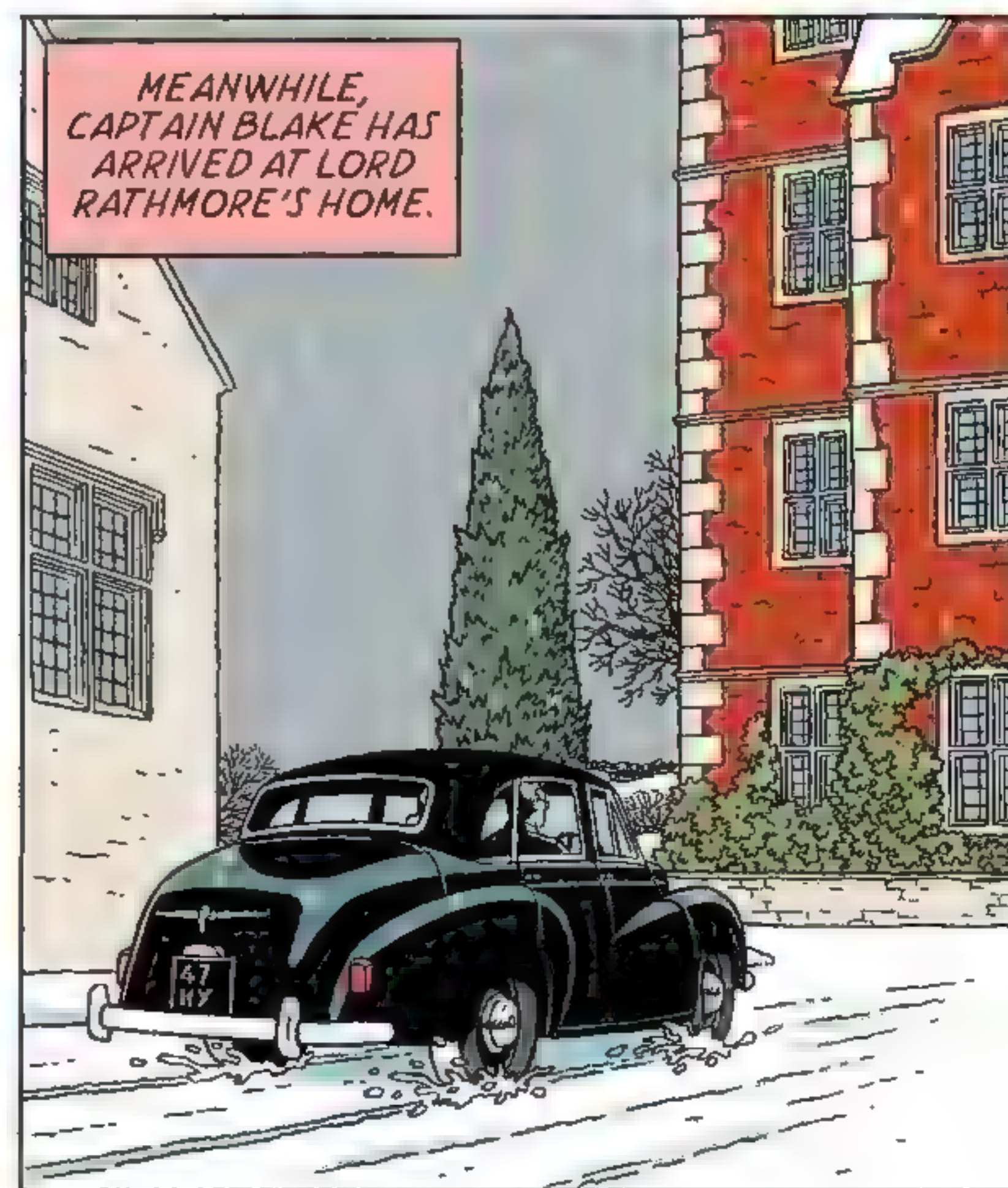
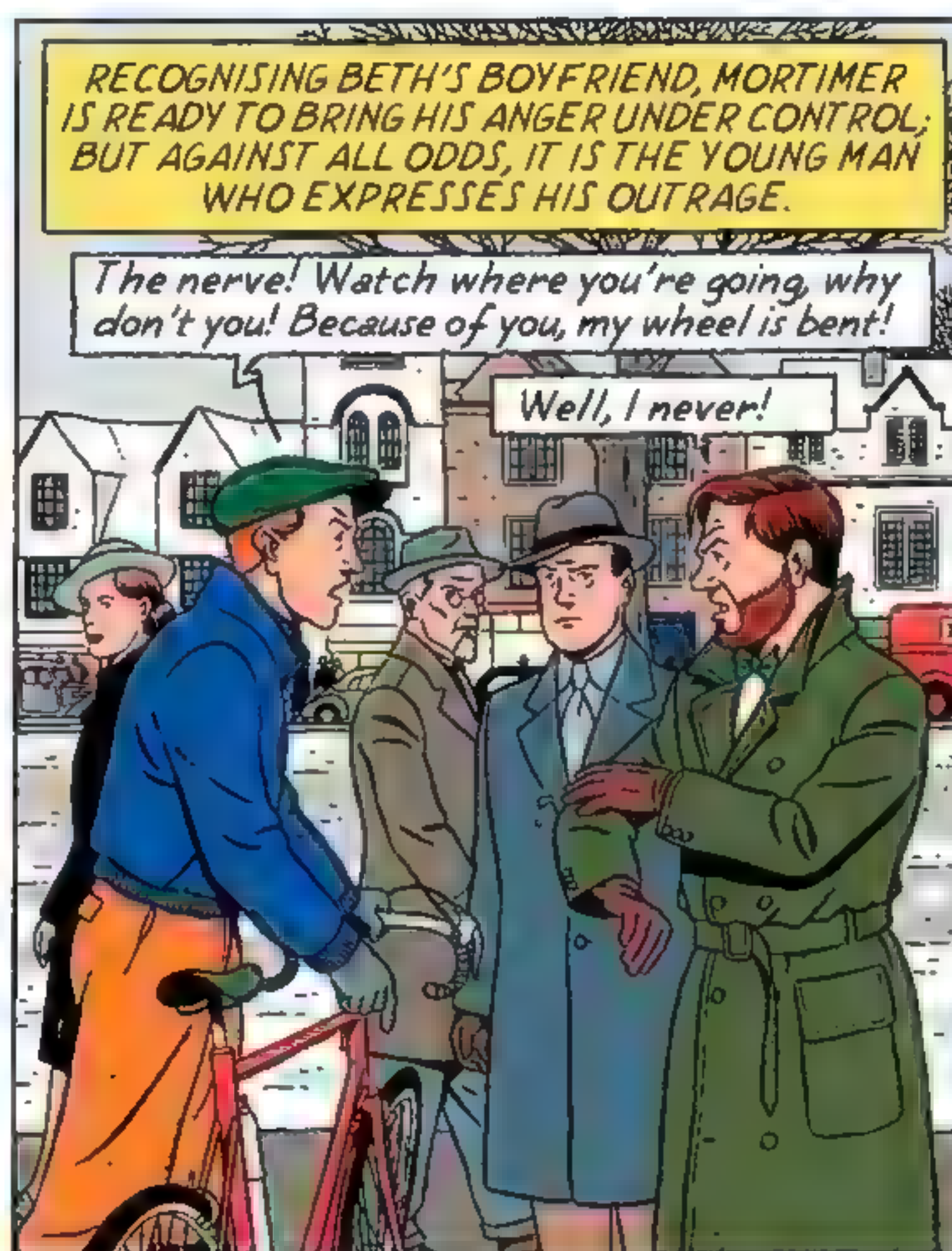
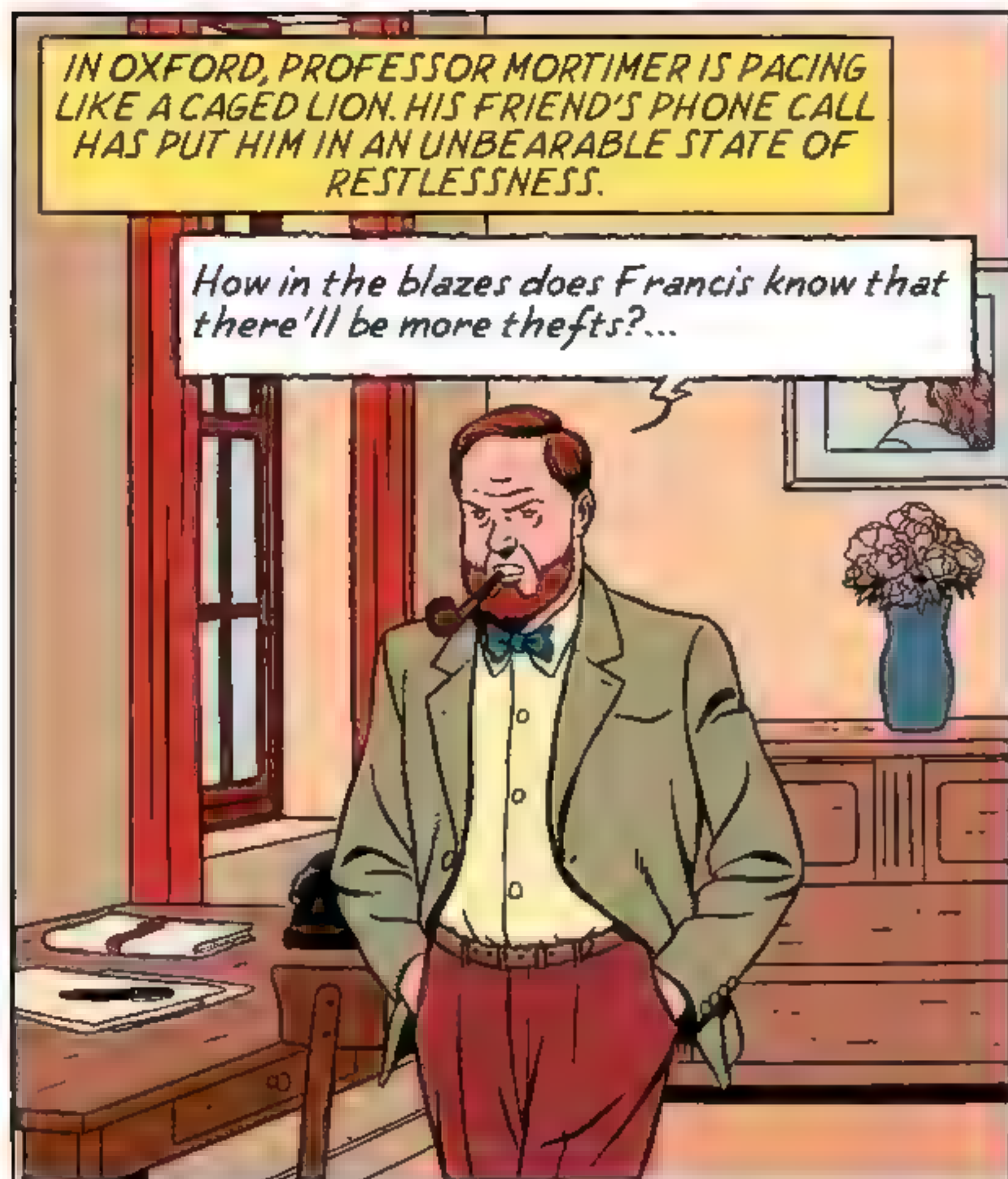
I'll meet you at the entrance in a car with a siren. Even with this snow, we should be able to make to Aylesbury in ... about an hour.

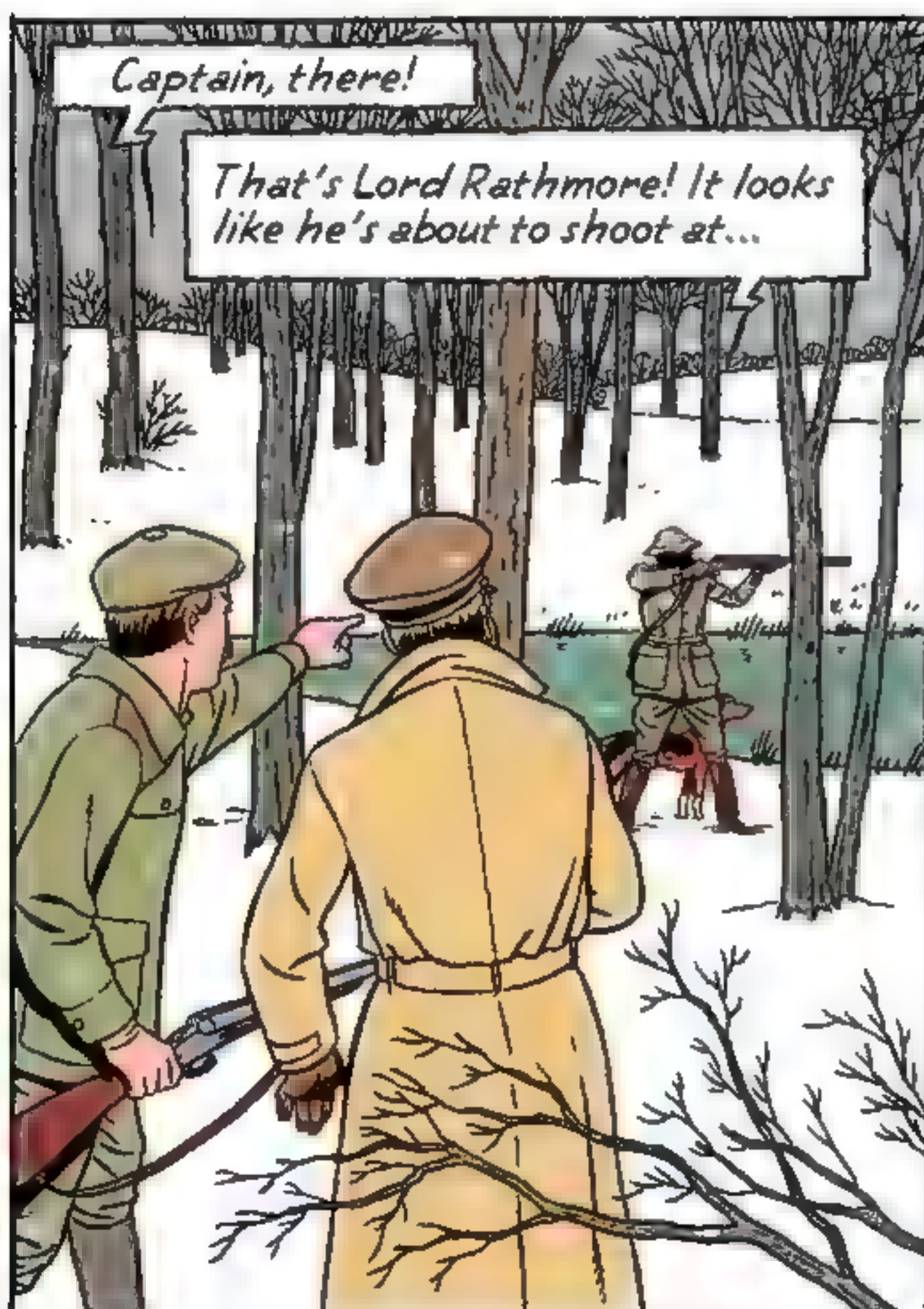
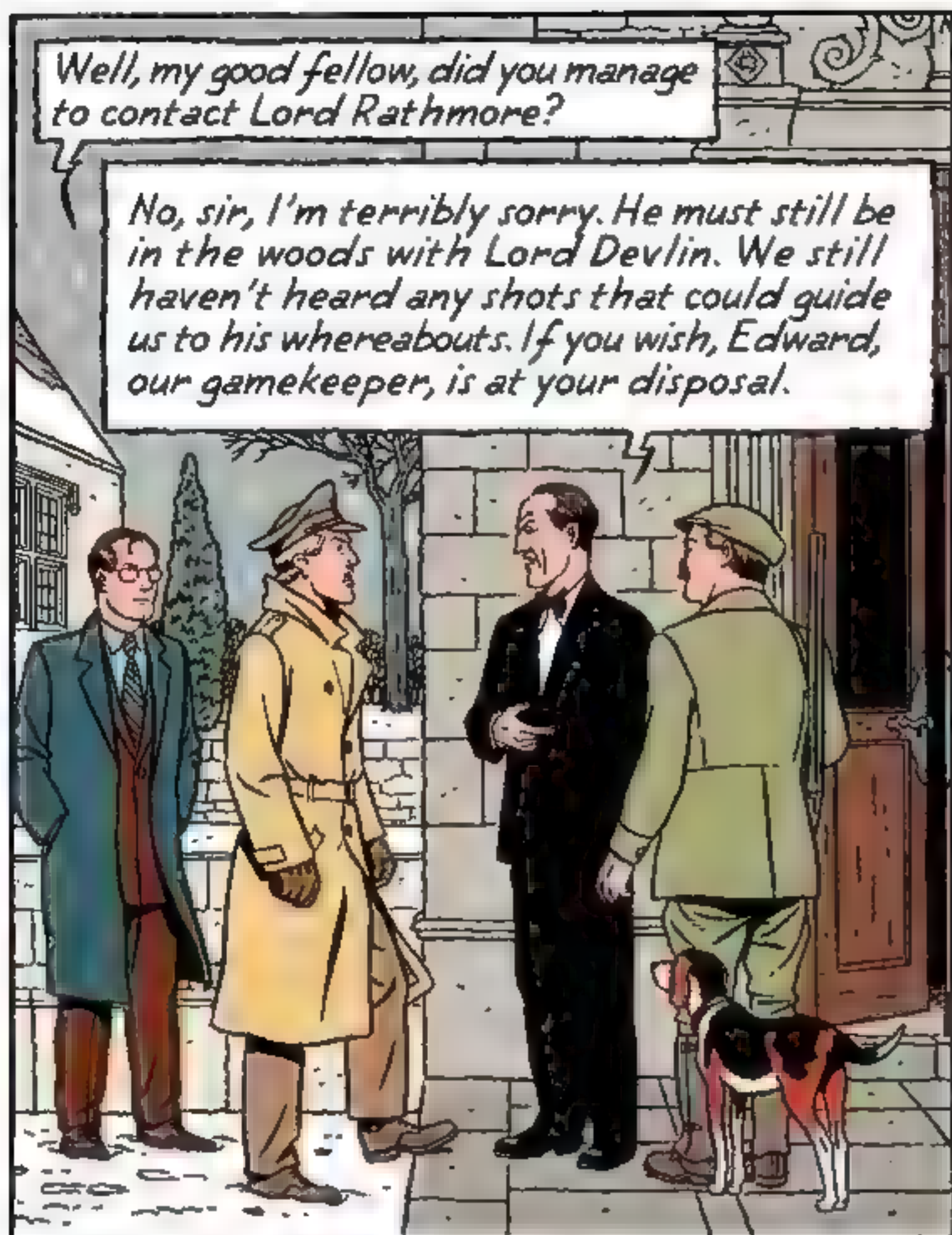


FIVE MINUTES LATER, THE M15 CAR TAKES OFF LIKE A SHOT AND HEADS NORTH-WEST OF THE CAPITAL.











Patrick! Stop!
Hold fire!

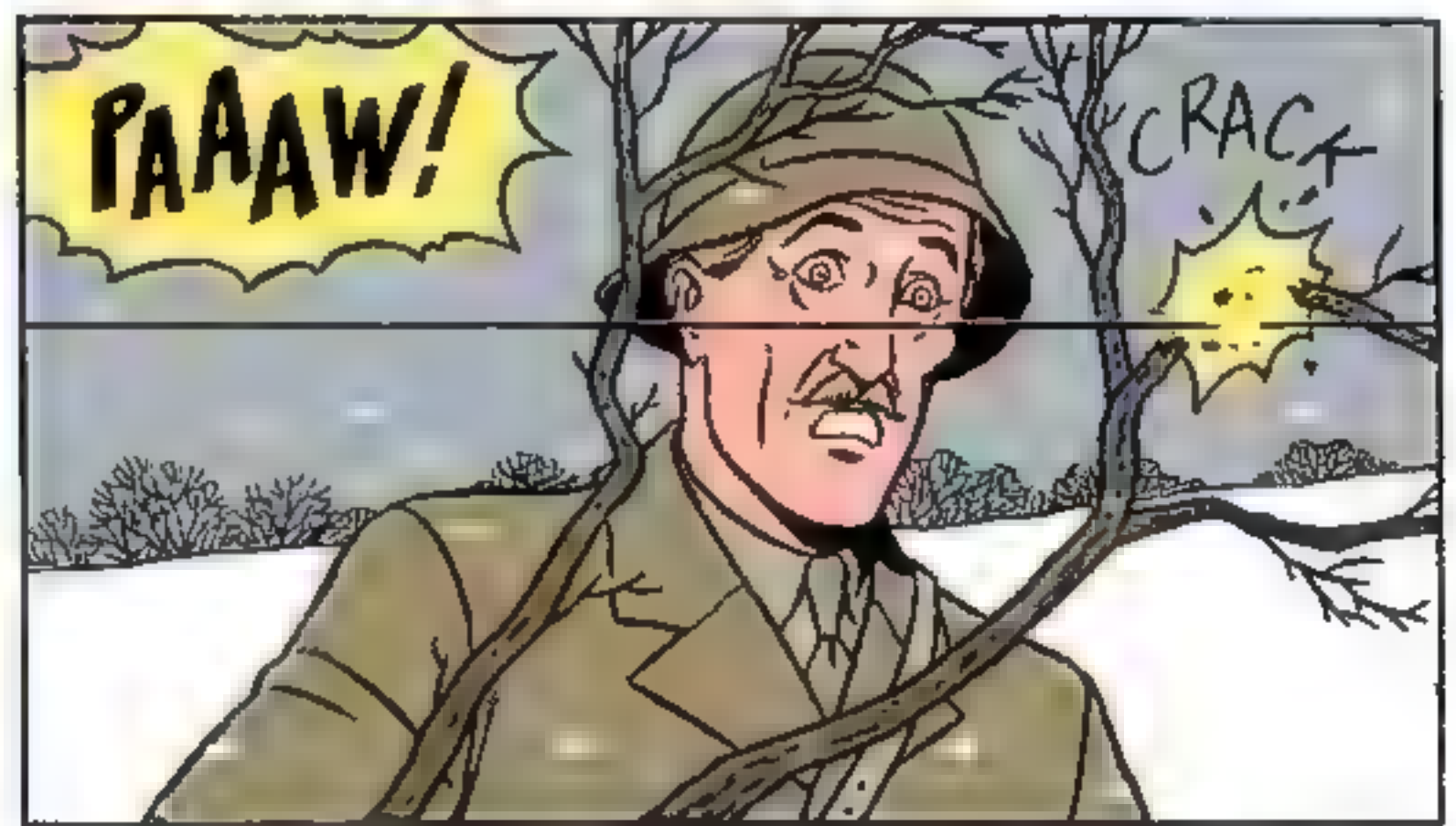


By Saint George! Francis?! What
is the meaning of this inopportune
interruption? Your shouting made
me miss my mark, gentlemen!

I have to speak to you
urgently, Patrick. And
to Brett too.



Look out! Everybody face down!



PAAAW!

CRACK



Patrick, get
down!



Are you hurt?

Er... n... no.
But what is...?



Drop your weapon or I will not
hesitate to shoot!



This is my land, young man,
and it is out of the question
that I drop my rifle for some
stranger!

TOX



Well, gentlemen, why such a hostile
threat?

Because, Brett, your shot only narrowly
missed shredding Patrick's face.



I... What?!
Surely you jest,
gentlemen?



Perhaps my shot
skimmed past our
friend's ear...



...but it's not because you ruined our hunt
with your shouting that our competition
will come to a stop! And here is the proof
that I won our 'reconciliation duel', my dear
Patrick! As agreed, the brandy is on you!

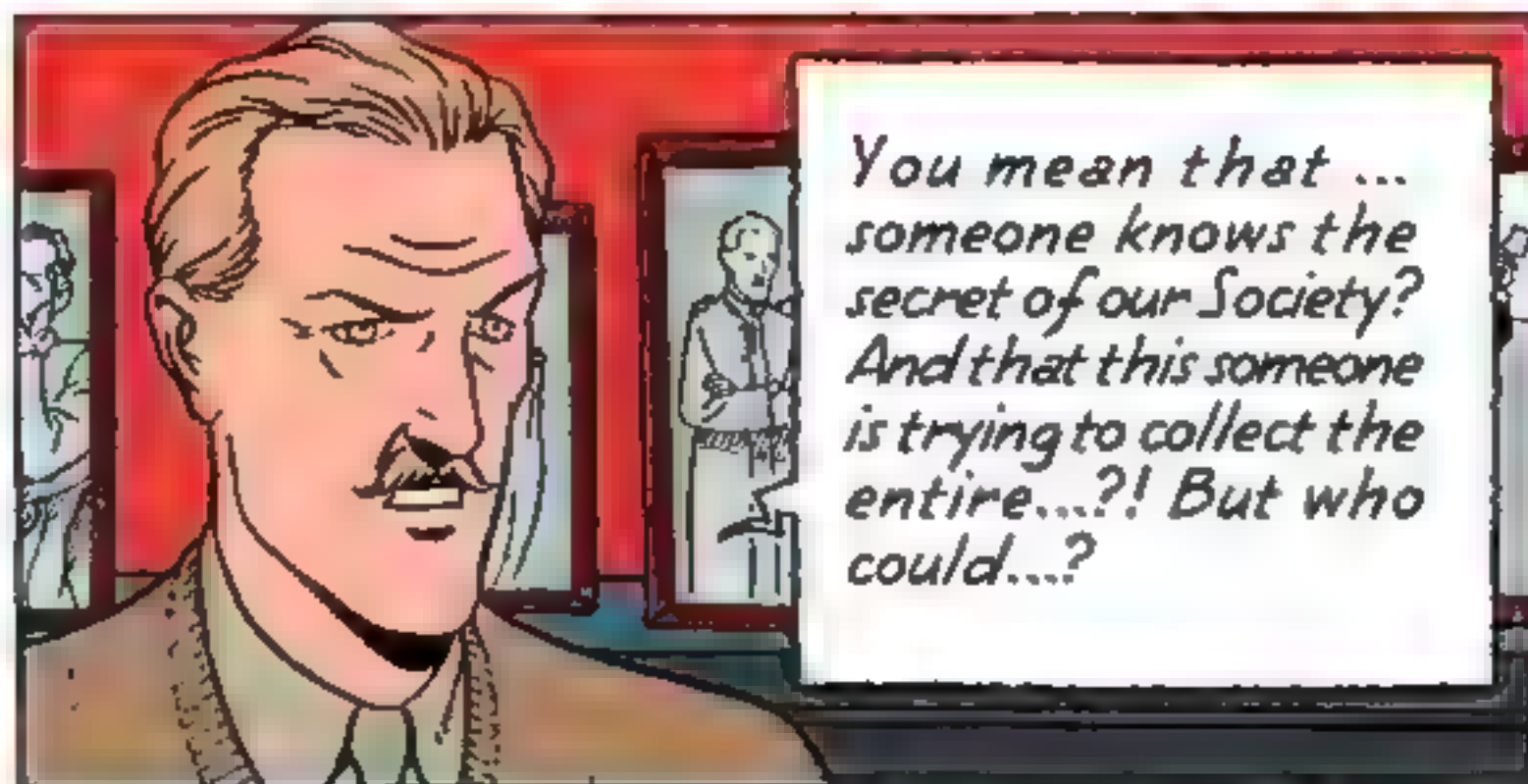
AFTER RETURNING TO RATHMORE HALL, AND AFTER BLAKE ASKED HIS DEPUTY TO LEAVE HIM ALONE WITH HIS FRIENDS, BRANDY IS SERVED IN THE LOUNGE.



To your health, gentlemen!

Well, Francis? Will you give us the reasons for your visit?

My friends, Brian Liddle died this morning in a fire at his house ... probably lit by Pickwick's killer. At the same time, an antique violin and a Greek vase that once belonged to them were stolen from the Ashmolean Museum... Like me, you must see what's happening...



You mean that ... someone knows the secret of our Society? And that this someone is trying to collect the entire...?! But who could...?

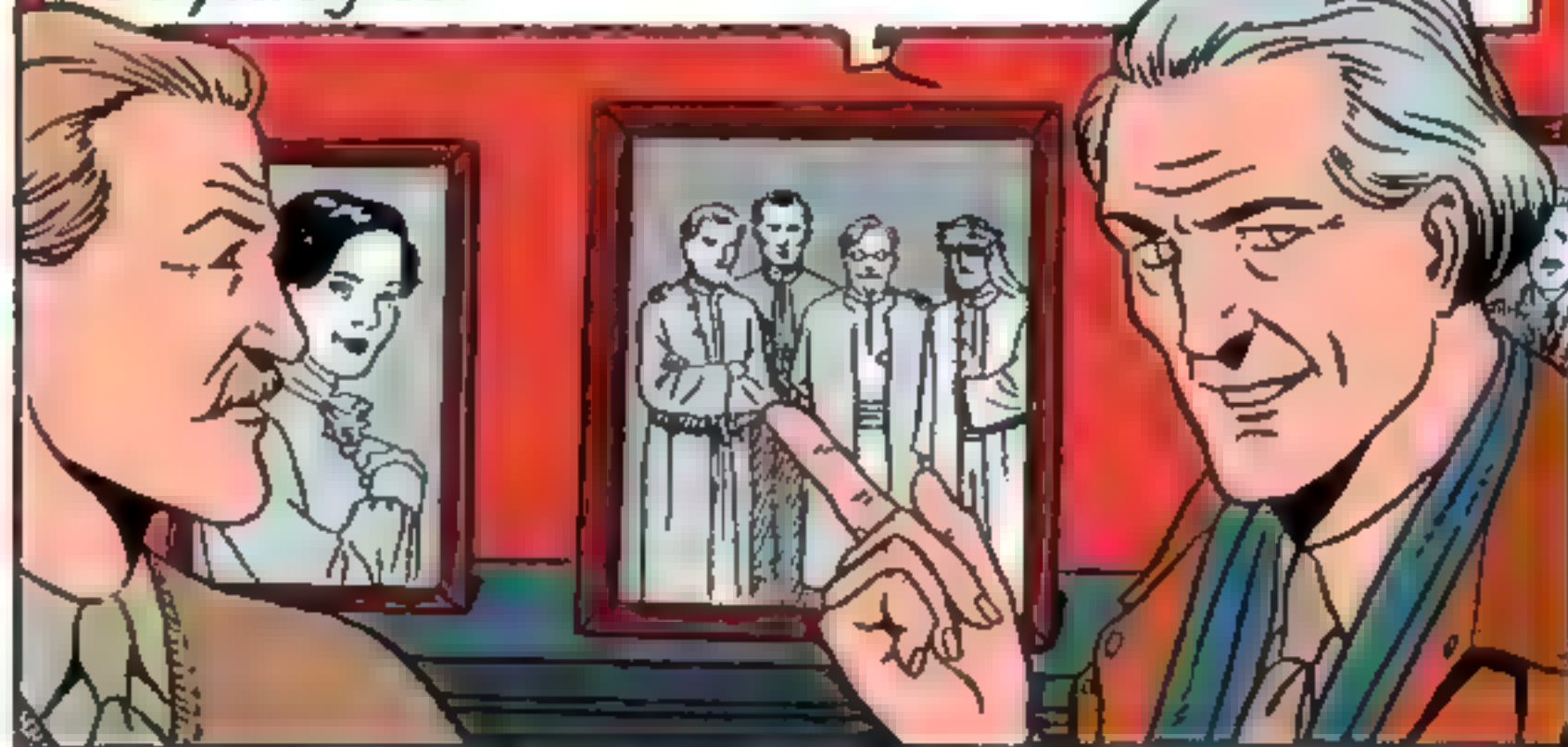
Apart from us, of course! And that's the reason why our dear friend from M15 came to see us. Isn't that right, Francis? You suspect one of us of being a traitor!



Come now, Brett! Let's keep a cool head! I'm not accusing anyone; above all, I'm worried about your safety. My men can take care of your protection, but I cannot help with your pages if you don't tell me where they are hidden.



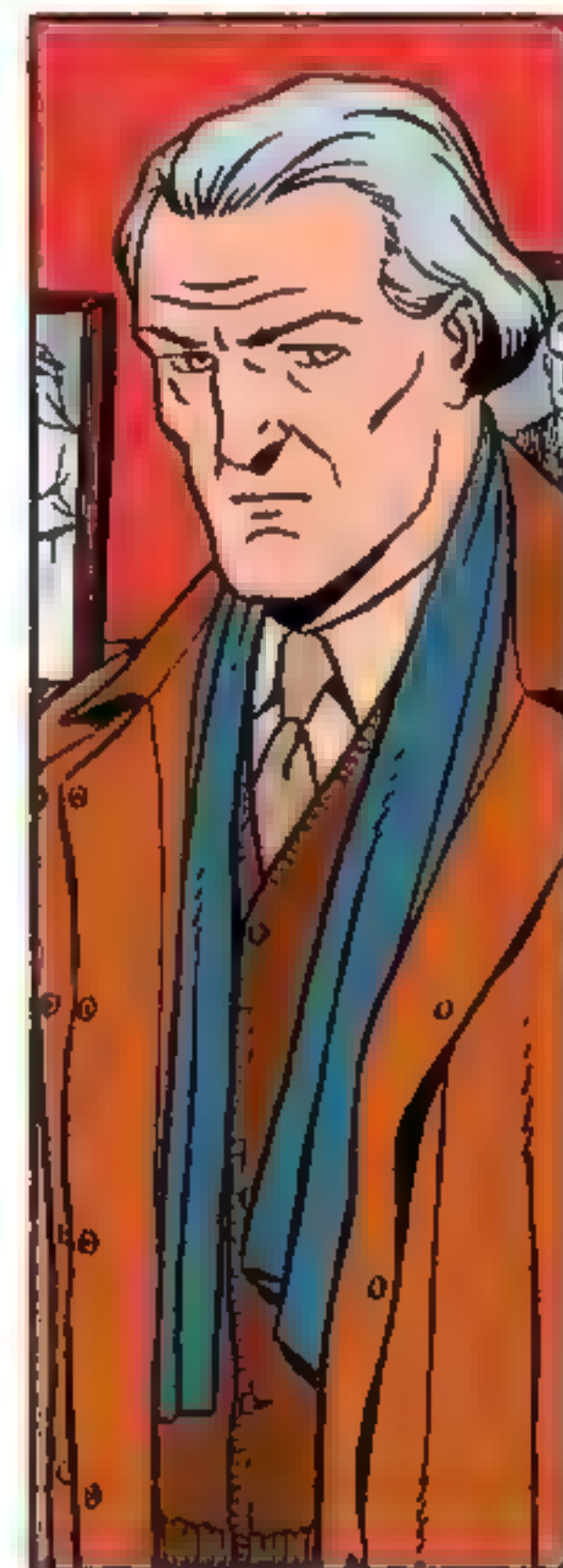
So, Blake ... all the members of our Society are suspects, then. All of them, without exceptions. Do you agree?



I understand your concern, Brett. That said, I reiterate my request: allow me to protect you, as well as your part in the secret, and the assassin will no longer have any reason to come after you.



CAPTAIN BLAKE WOULD LONG REMEMBER THE HEAVY SILENCE THAT FOLLOWED HIS REQUEST...

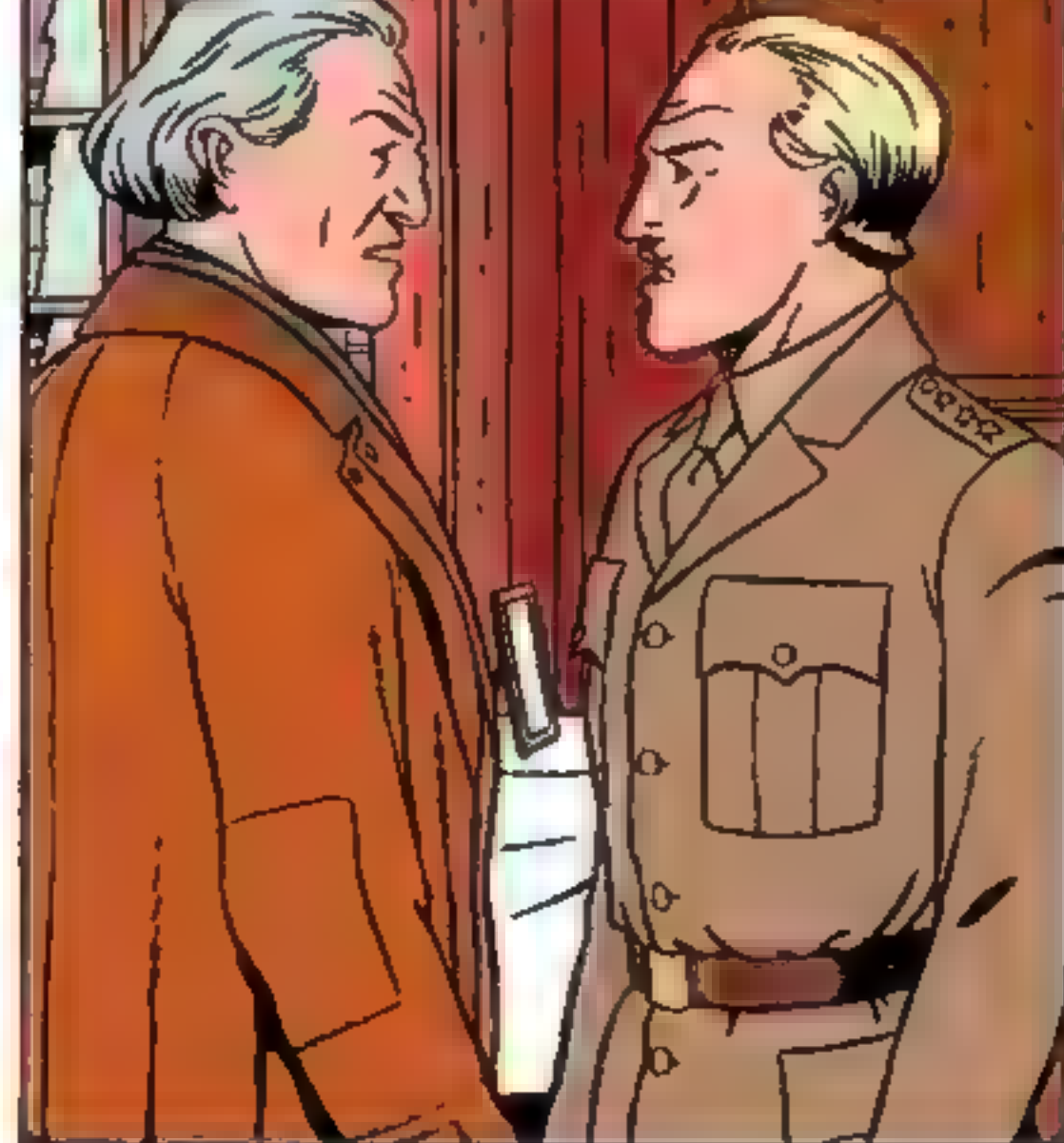


Gentlemen, 19 years ago I swore a solemn oath to protect the secret until my death. A Devlin doesn't take such an oath lightly, and it is unthinkable that I break it.



As for my life, I value it. Therefore I accept your protection, Francis. And let's hope it will be truly effective...

You can count on me, Brett.

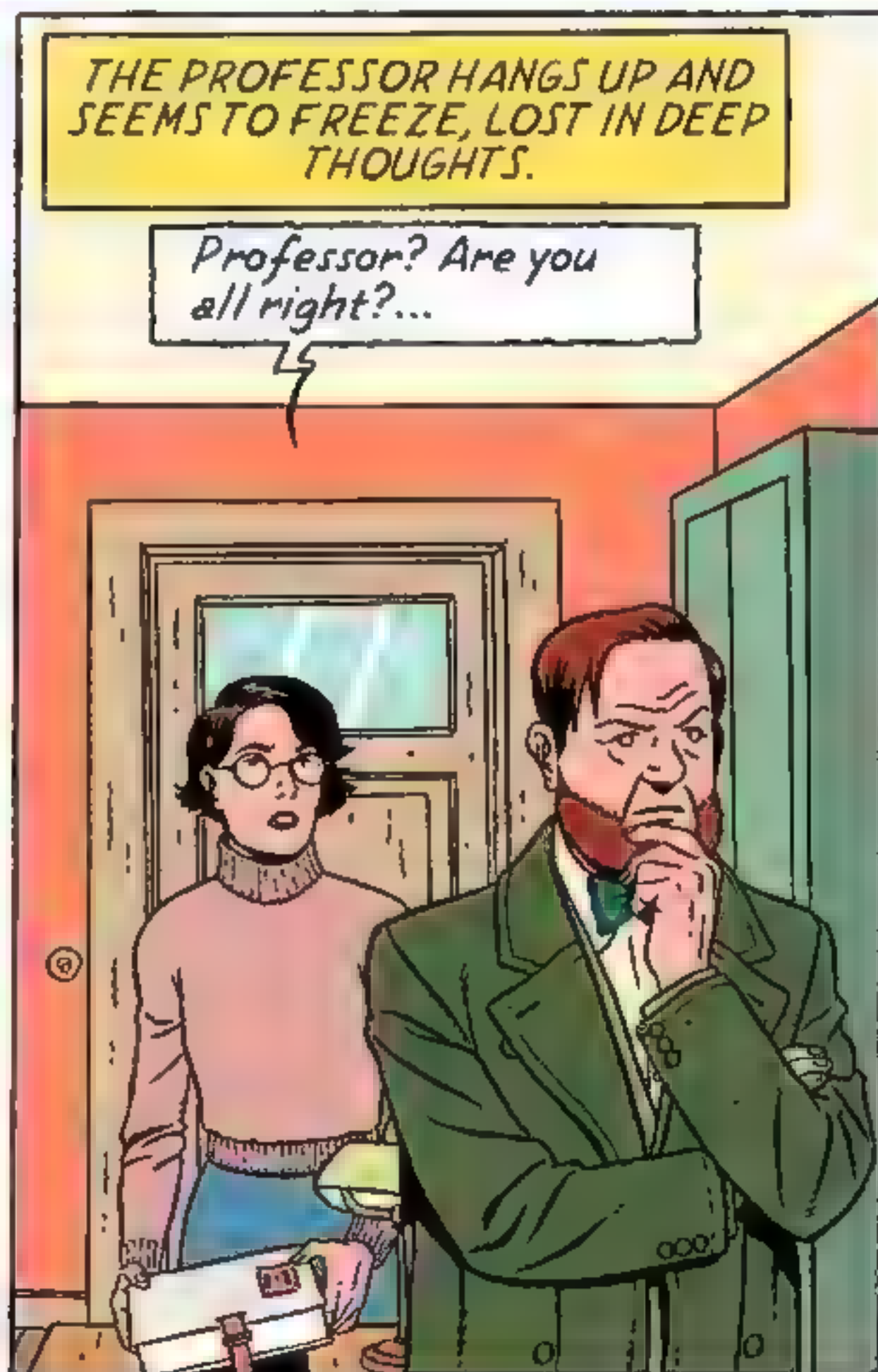
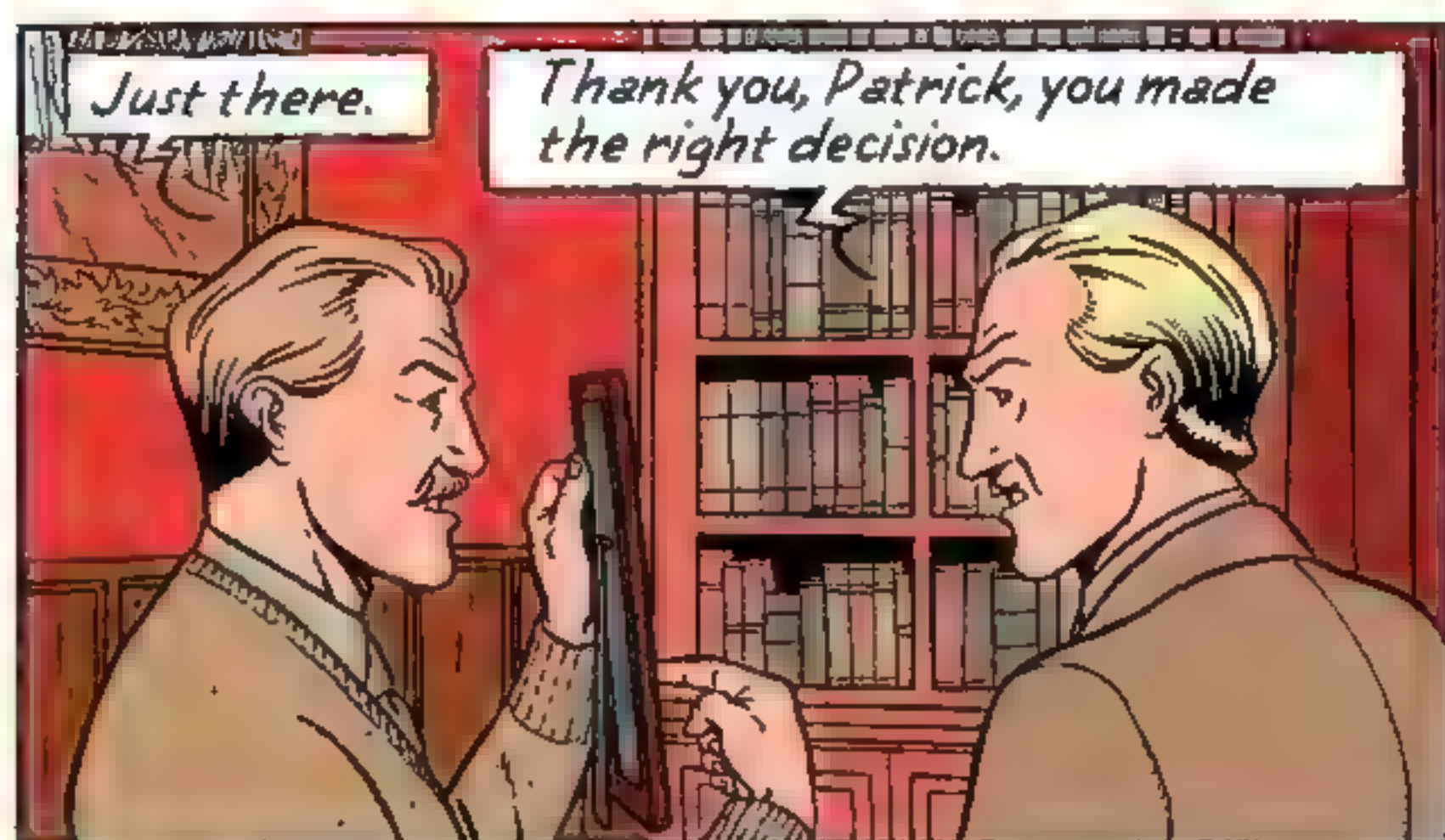


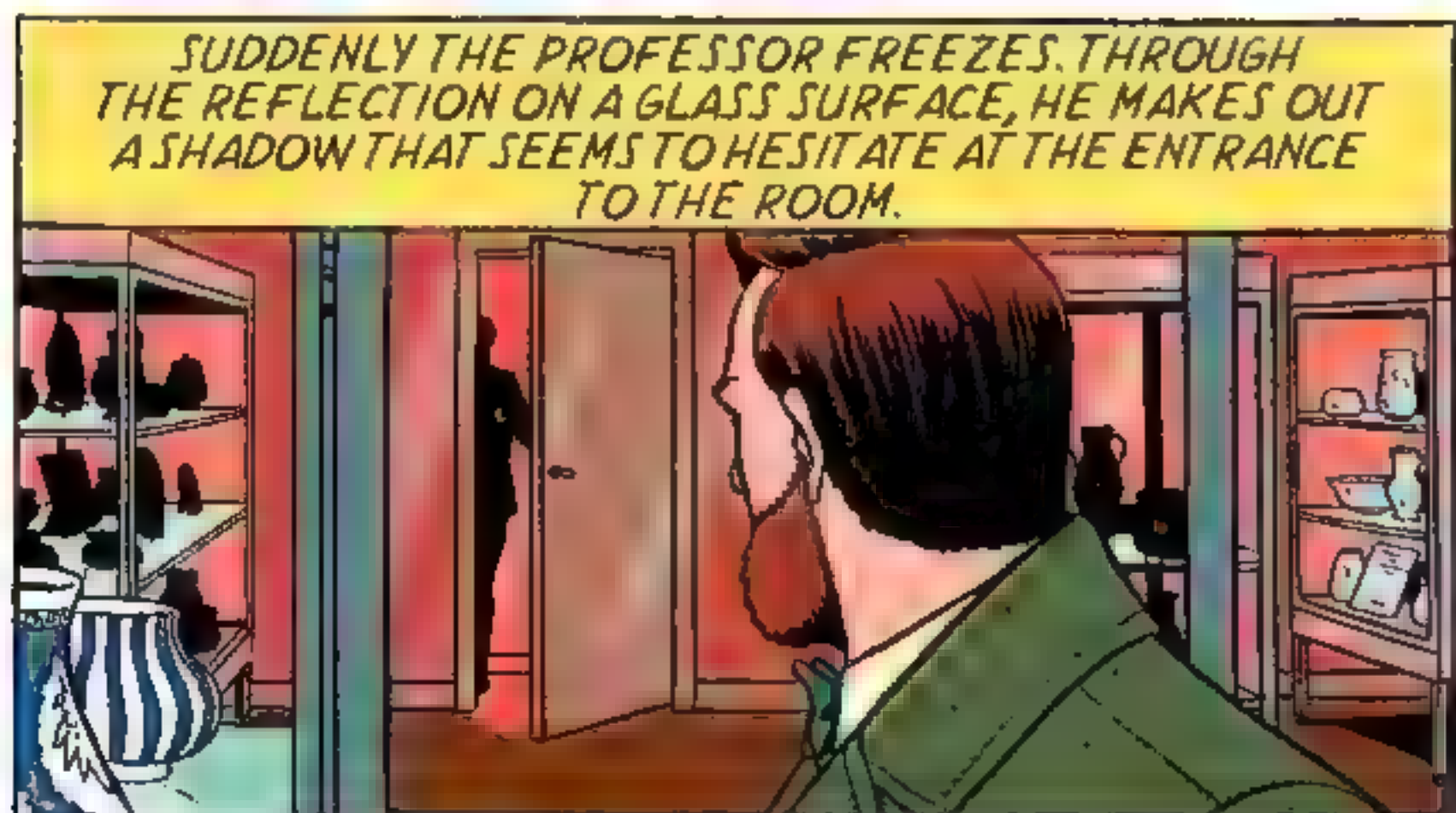
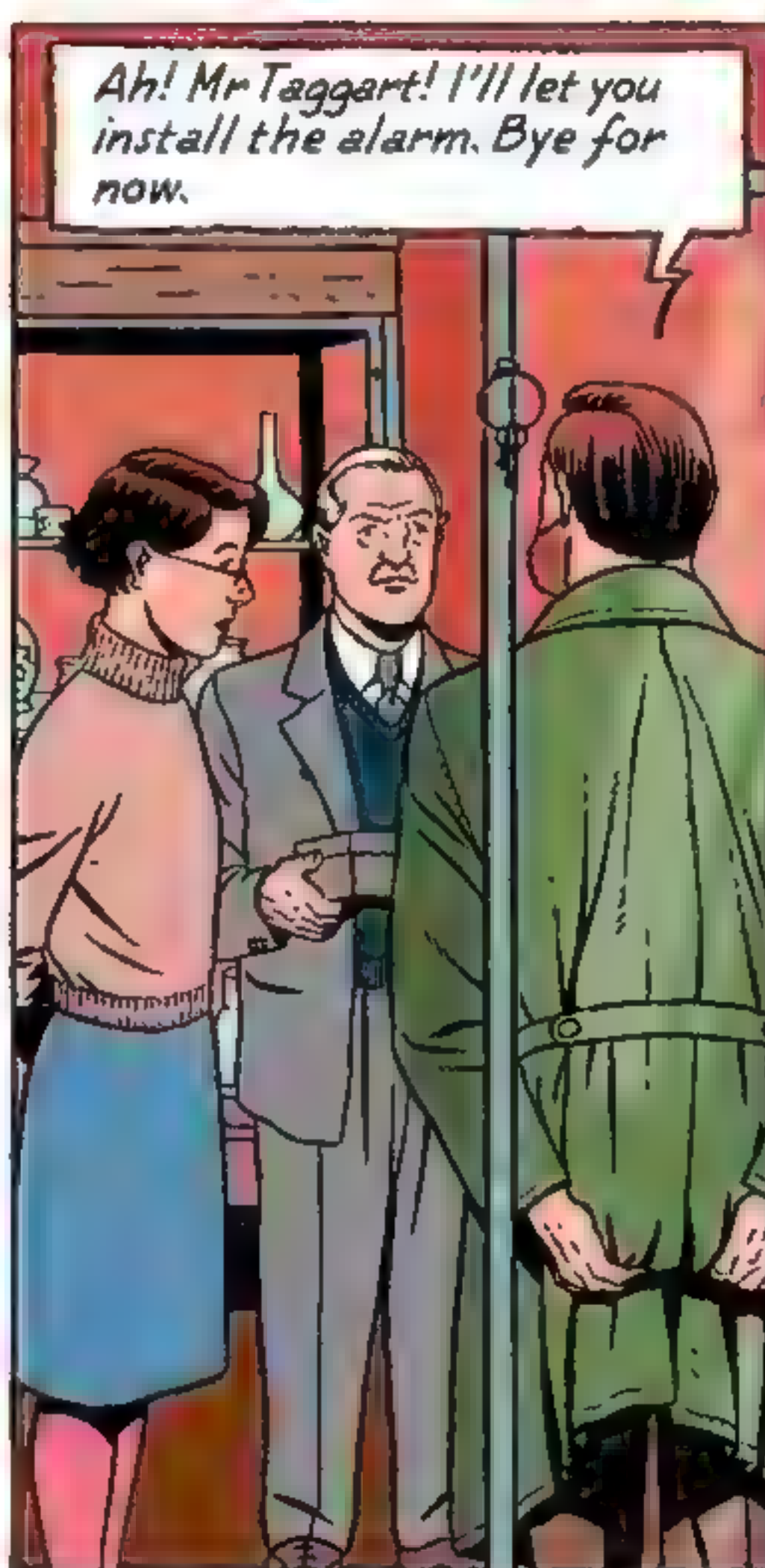
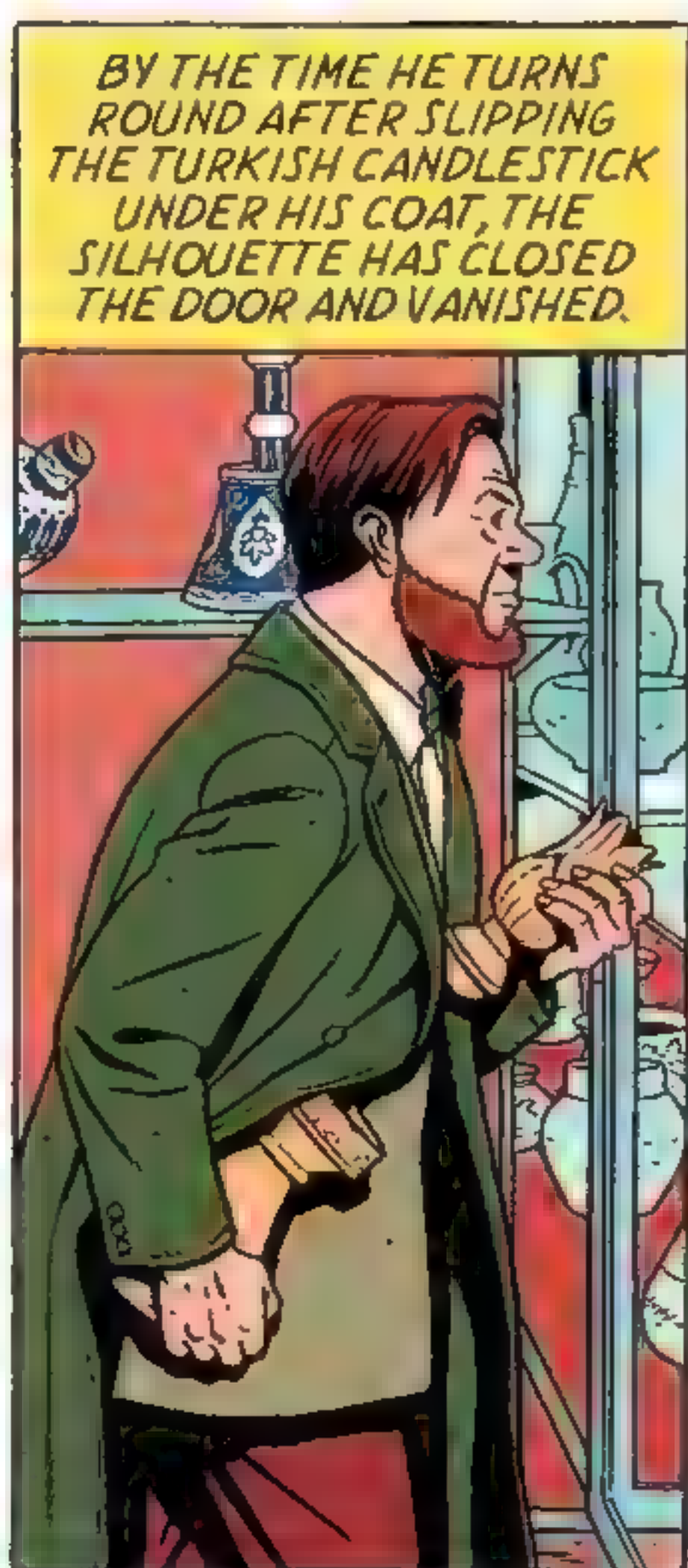
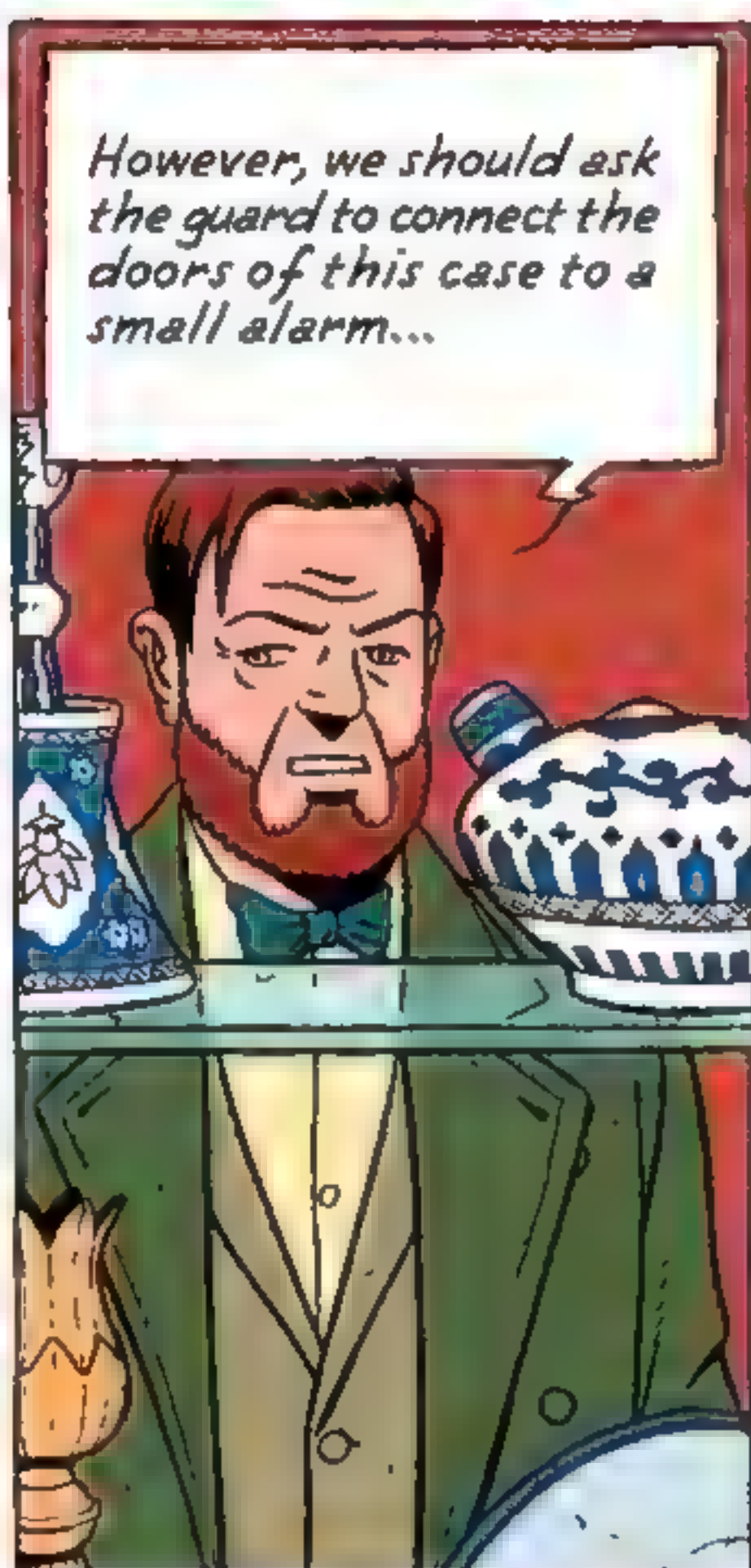
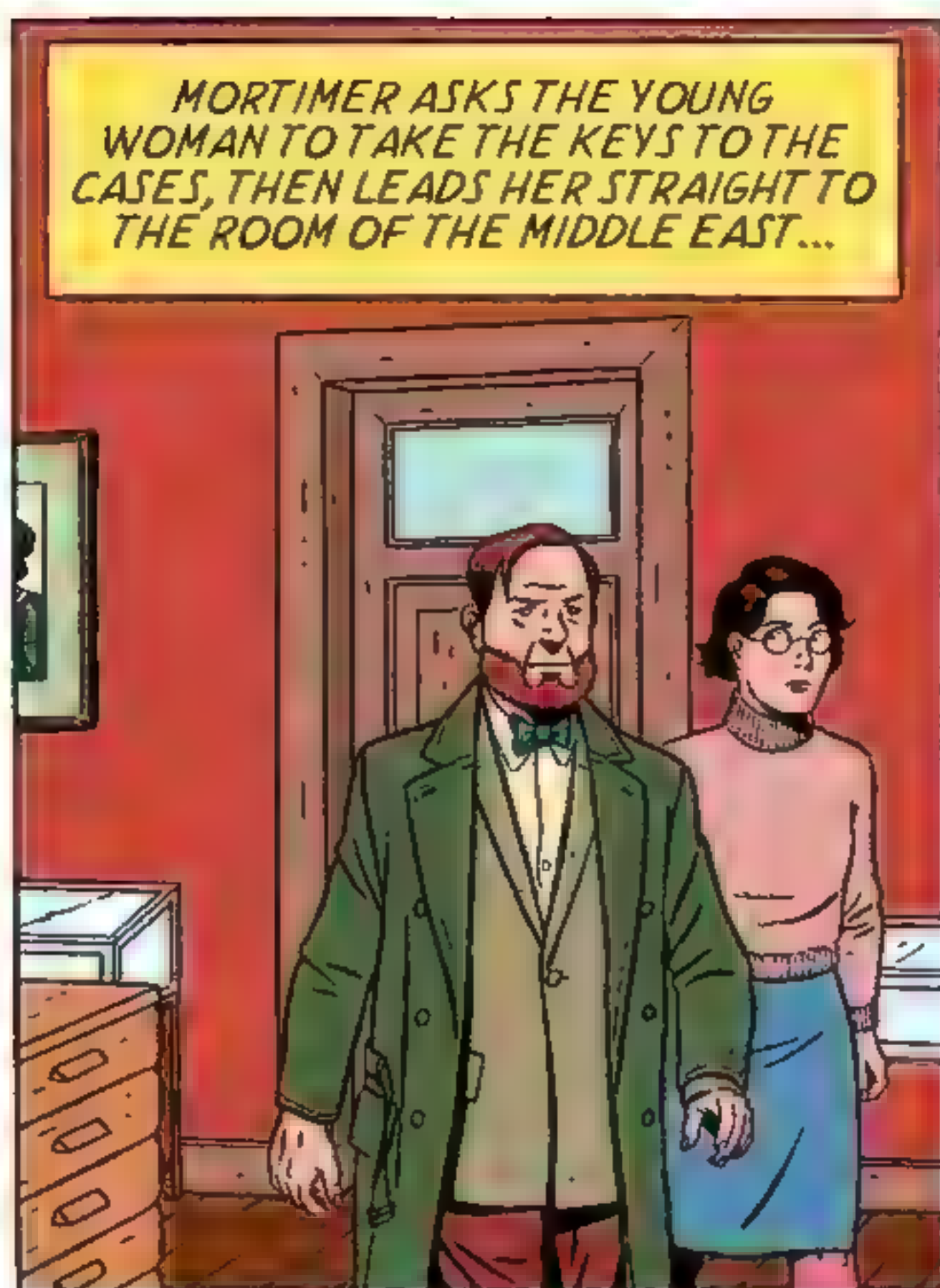
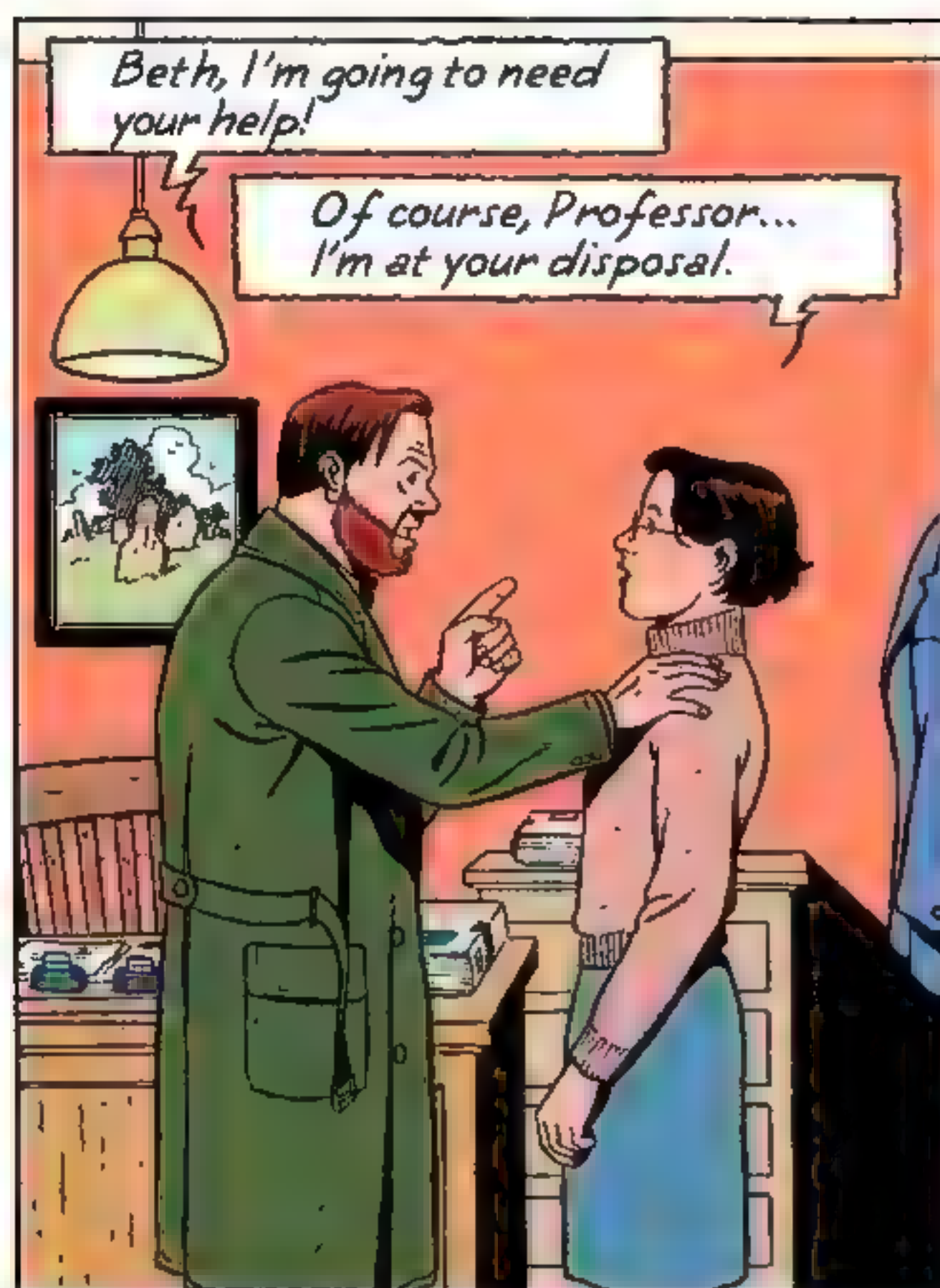
As for you, Patrick, I was most surprised when you failed to support our Prime Minister after the war. But... Anyway, I consider that we've buried this dispute once and for all as of today.

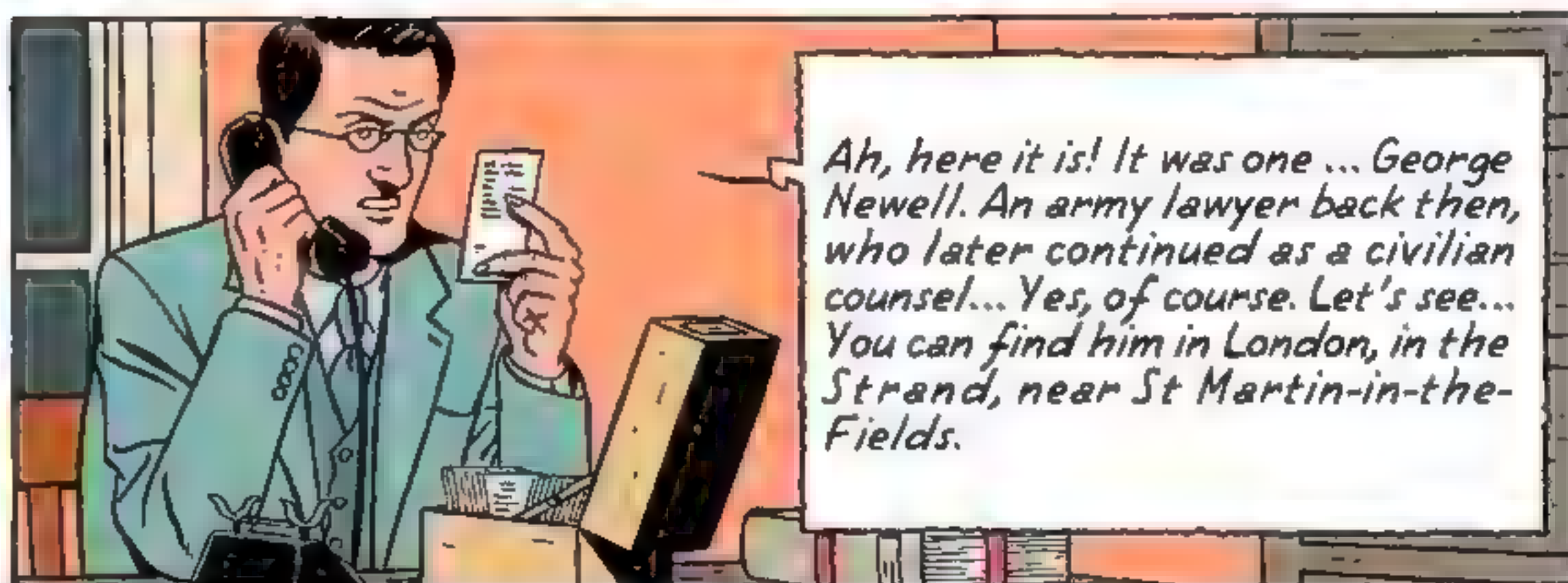
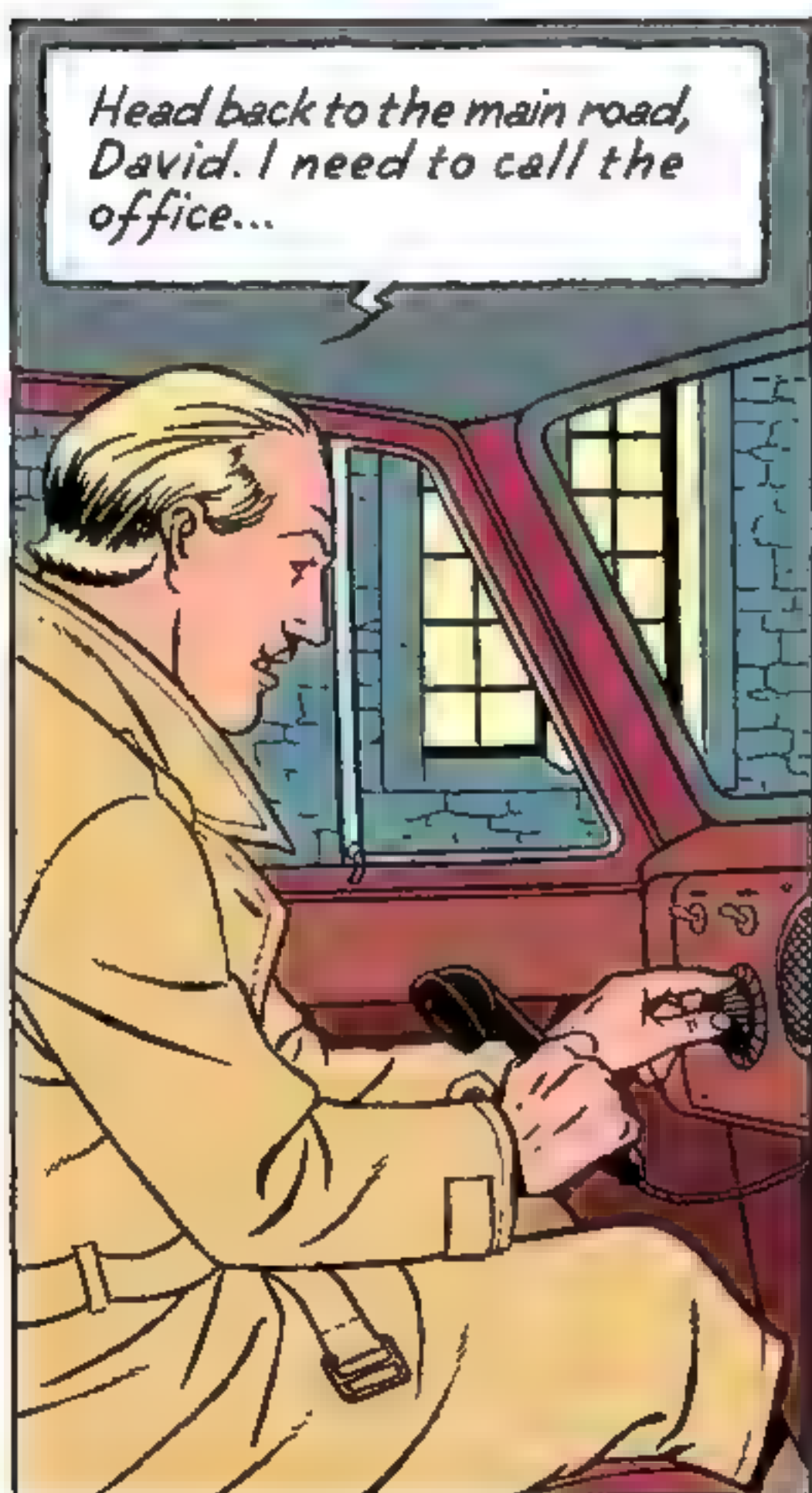
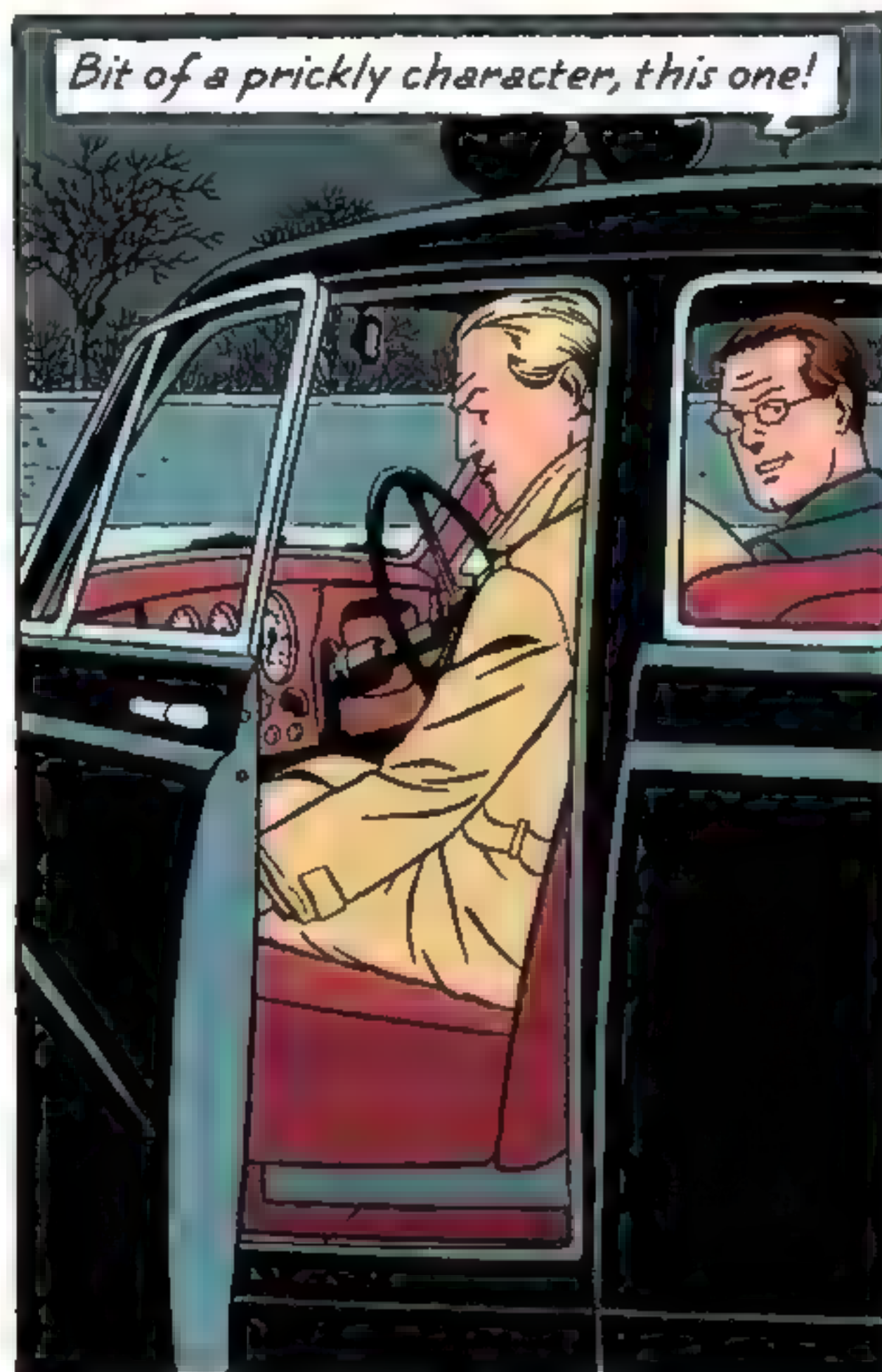
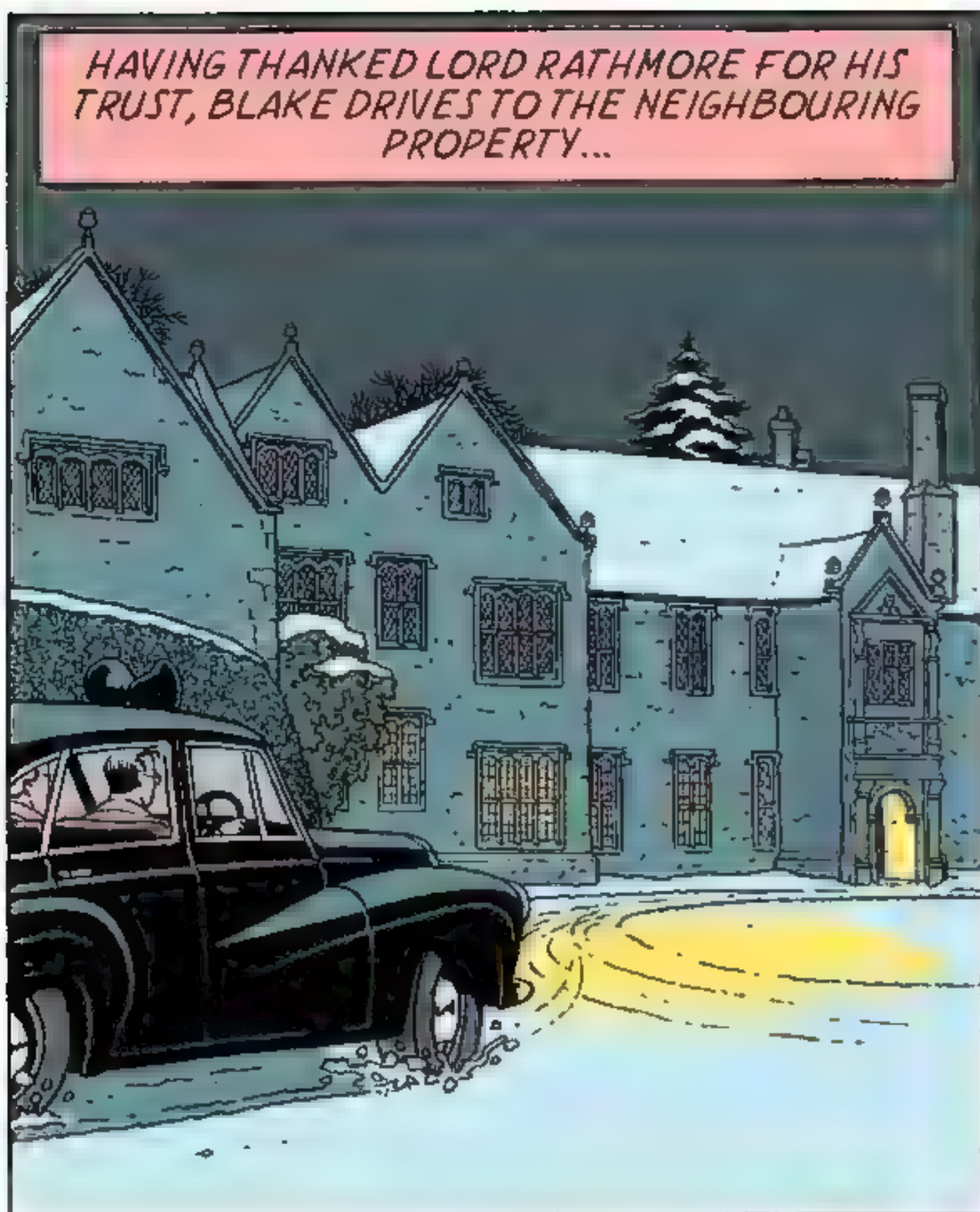


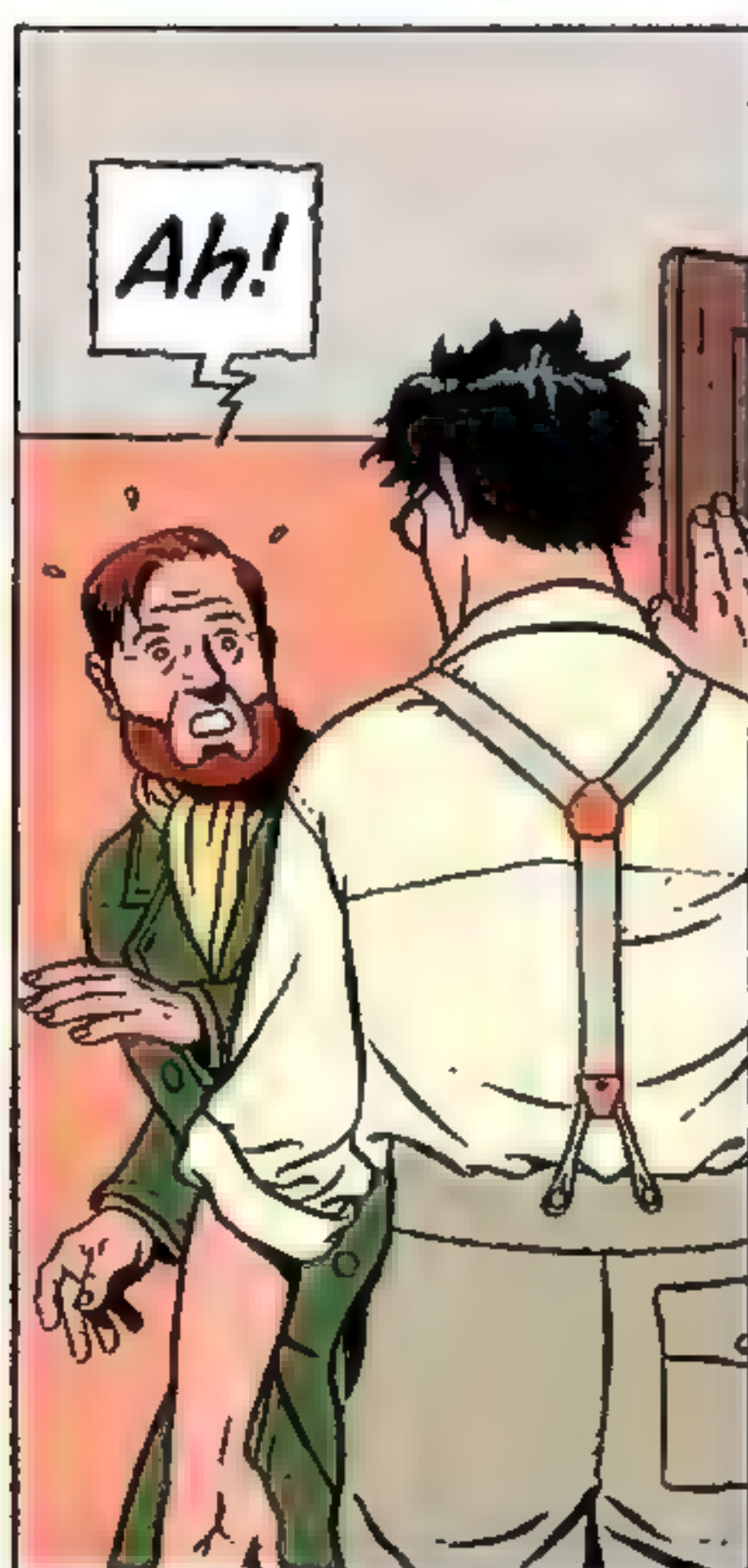
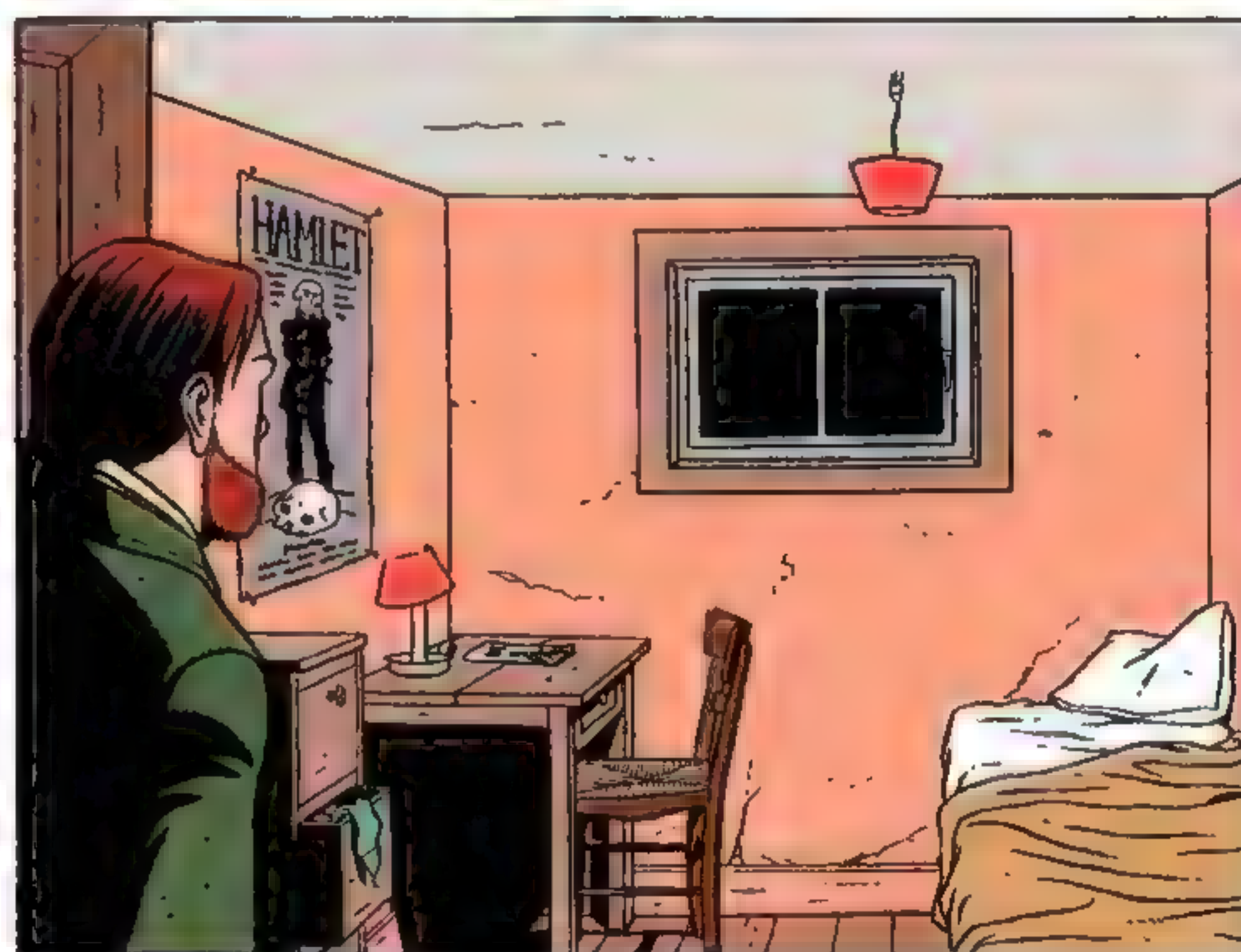
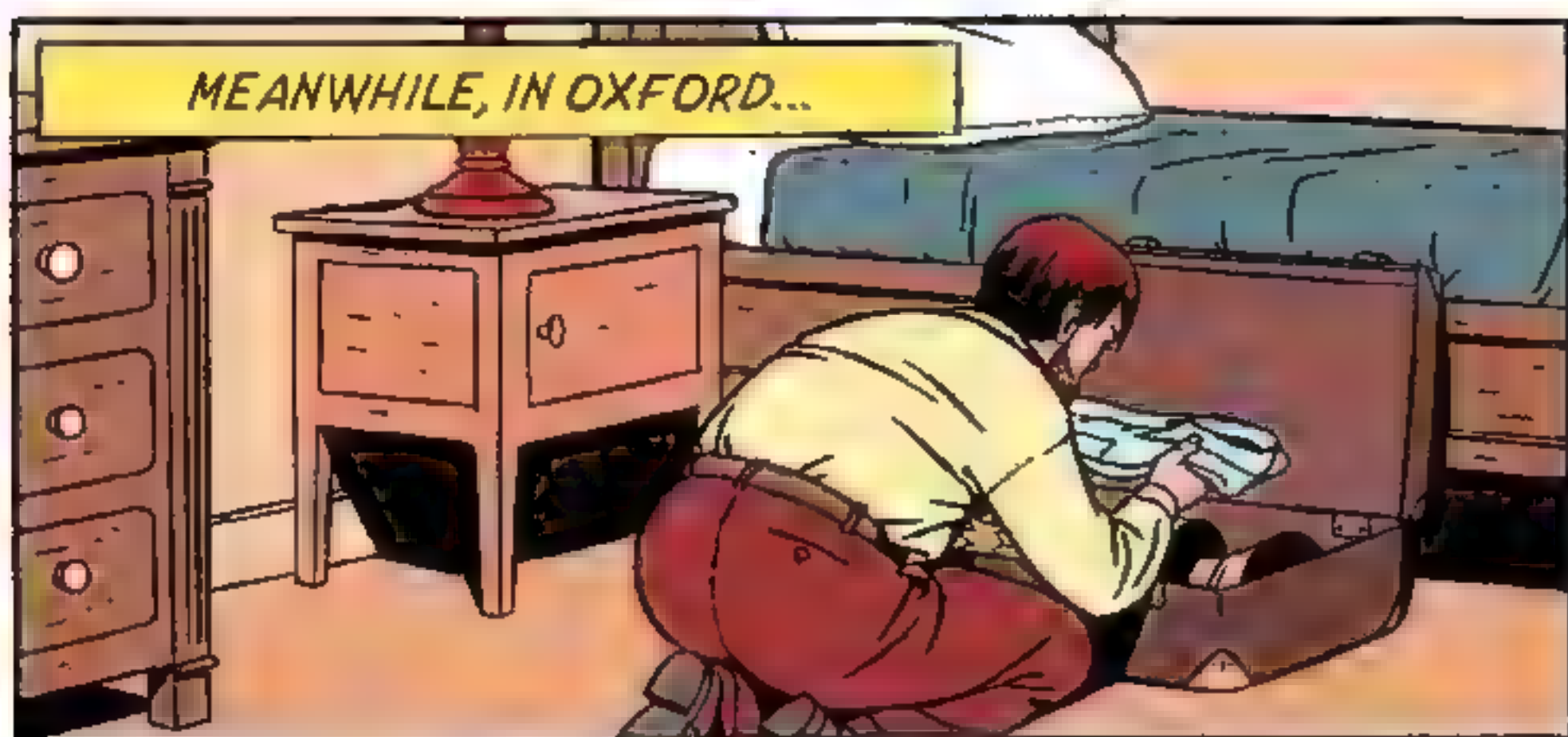
Do not disappoint me again, though! If you break your oath, I swear that the next time I use my rifle, it won't be on a partridge!









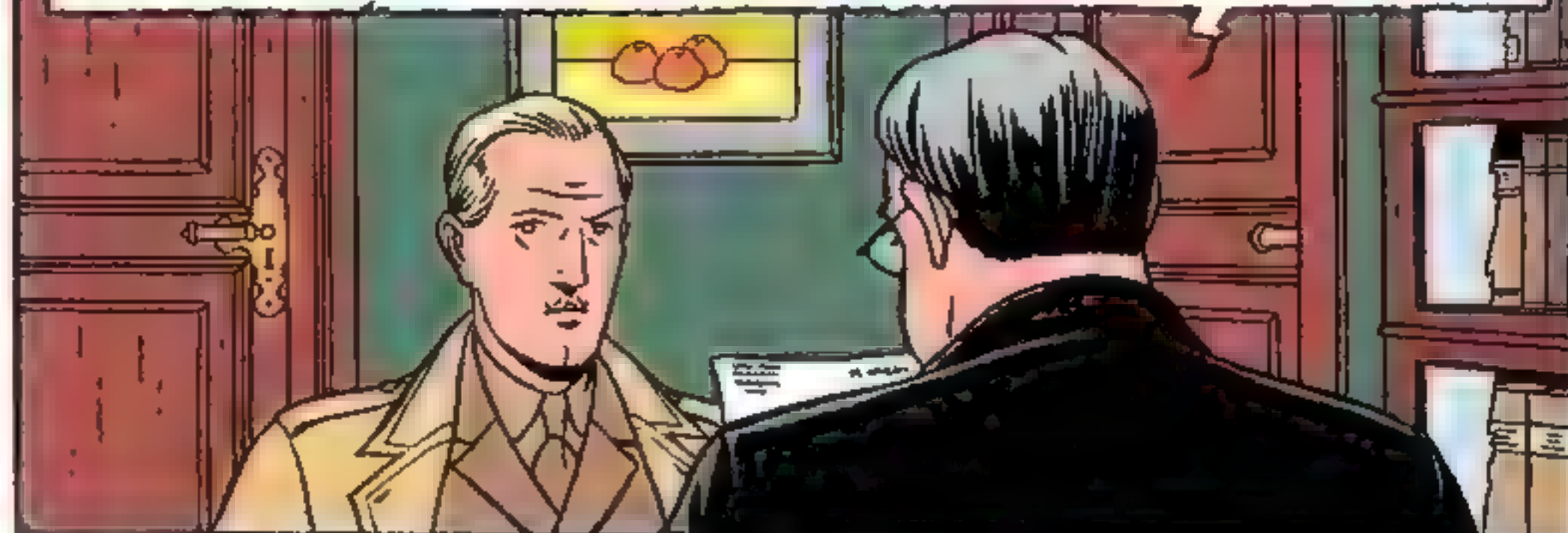


SOME 50 MINUTES AFTER LEAVING HIGH WYCOMBE, THE CAR DRIVEN BY DAVID HONEYCHURCH STOPS BEFORE THE OFFICES OF GEORGE NEWELL IN THE STRAND, LONDON.

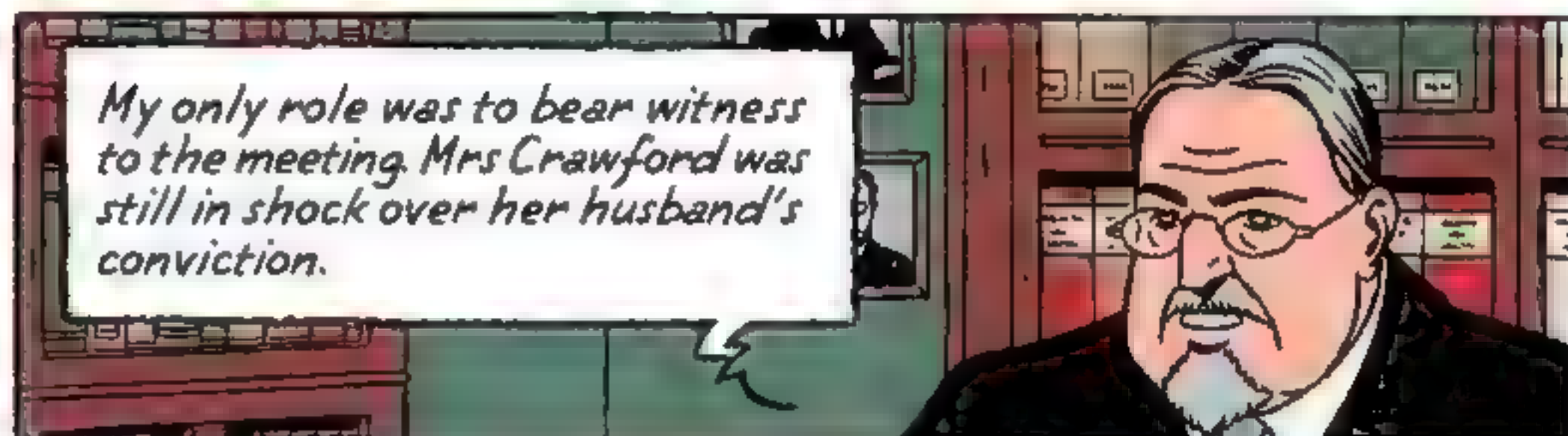


AS AGREED, THE SOLICITOR HAS LOOKED FOR THE INFORMATION REQUESTED OVER THE PHONE.

Two days after he was sentenced, my client, Alister Crawford, asked to see me as well as his wife Dorothy. He wanted to give her a letter for his son, barely a year old at the time, which he should receive and read on the day he turned 20...



My only role was to bear witness to the meeting. Mrs Crawford was still in shock over her husband's conviction.

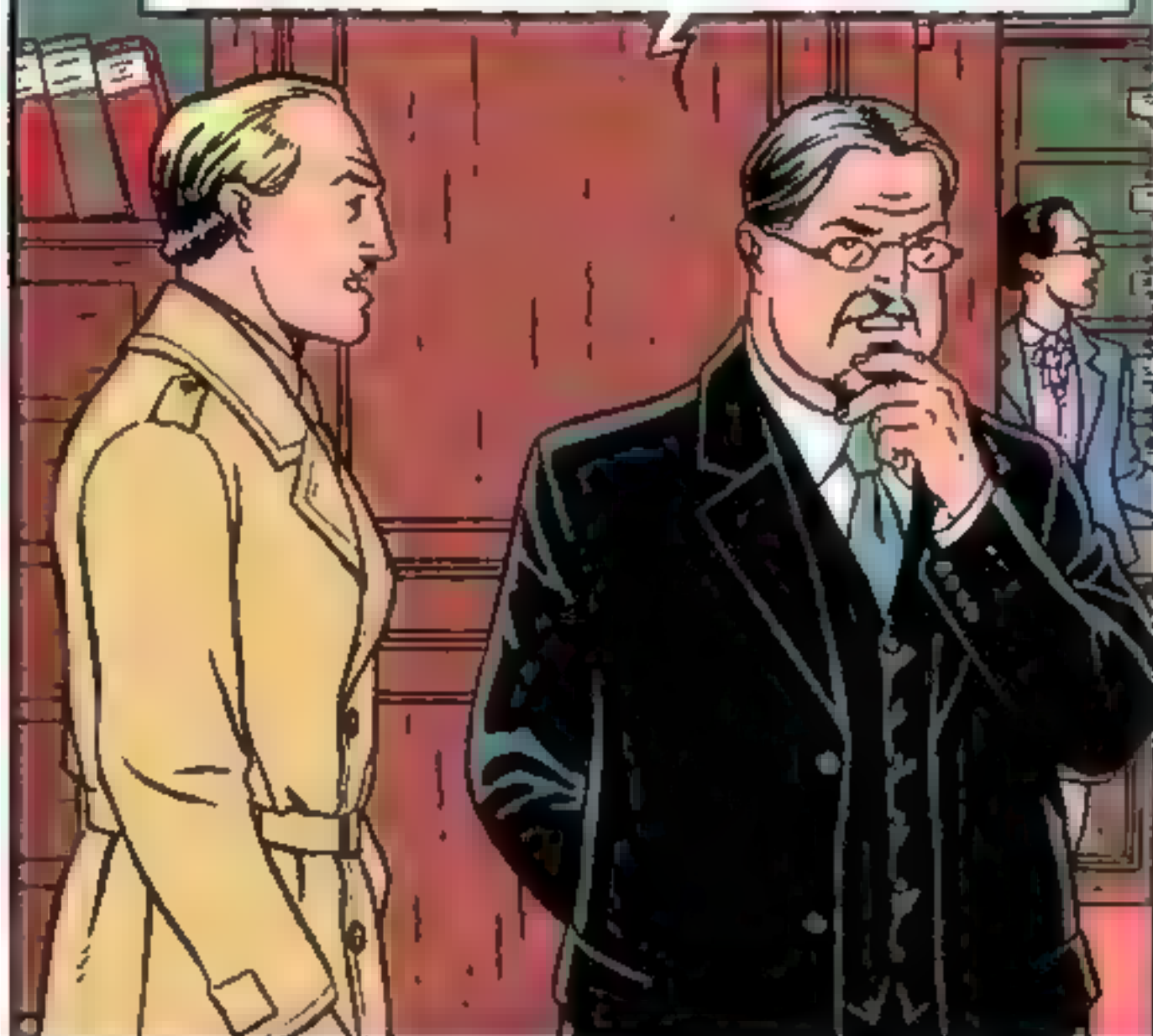


The next day, when I had to go and tell her that he had committed suicide, the poor woman collapsed... Shortly afterwards she fell into a deep depression.



Do you know what became of Dorothy Crawford and that letter?

No. The last time I contacted her to see how she was doing, she simply said she was going to live with a cousin in ... Bristol, I believe.



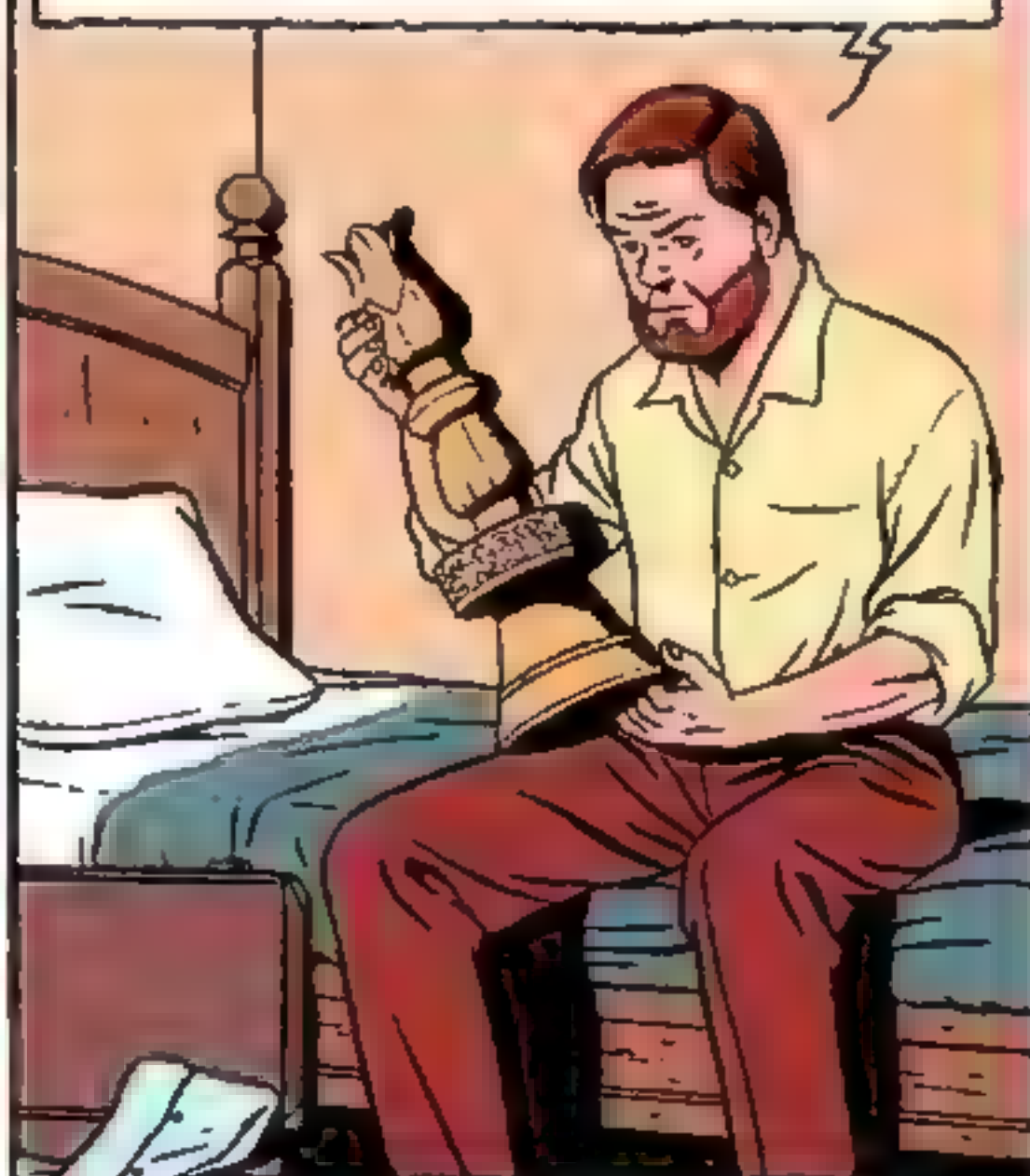
Let's head for Scotland Yard! I have to call the Bristol police as soon as possible.



AT THAT SAME MOMENT, IN OXFORD, PROFESSOR MORTIMER RETURNS TO HIS FLAT...



Poor Beth. I feel bad not telling her the truth, but Blake's right. It's probably better for her safety. Now let's have a look at this object... It seems abnormally heavy...



By Jove!



UNABLE TO REFRAIN HIS CURIOSITY, THE PROFESSOR BEGINS READING THE STRANGE HANDWRITTEN PAGES.



AT LORD RATHMORE'S RESIDENCE TOO, NIGHT FELL, ALONG WITH ANOTHER SNOWSTORM.

Good Lord! Where on earth is that police security team Blake promised? It's almost seven already!

Bom!

?!

James! I heard a noise! Was that you?...

James!

PANICKING, LORD RATHMORE RUSHES TO THE FRONT DOOR IN THE HOPE OF SEEING BLAKE'S MEN ARRIVING AT LAST...

...HIS HOPE IMMEDIATELY DASHED BY THE DISCOVERY OF HIS GAMEKEEPER'S LIFELESS BODY.

What the devil?!

How wonderfully apt, Lord Rathmore!

Good gracious! What... Who are you?...

Justice, of course! Surely you must have known I was bound to catch up with you one day, Lord Rathmore?

Do come in. You'll catch your death...

AT THAT MOMENT, THE TEAM SENT BY BLAKE FINALLY ARRIVES WITHIN SIGHT OF THE HOUSE...

Here we are, sir! That's the entrance of the estate!

Put your foot down, Richard! We've already lost too much time with this snow!

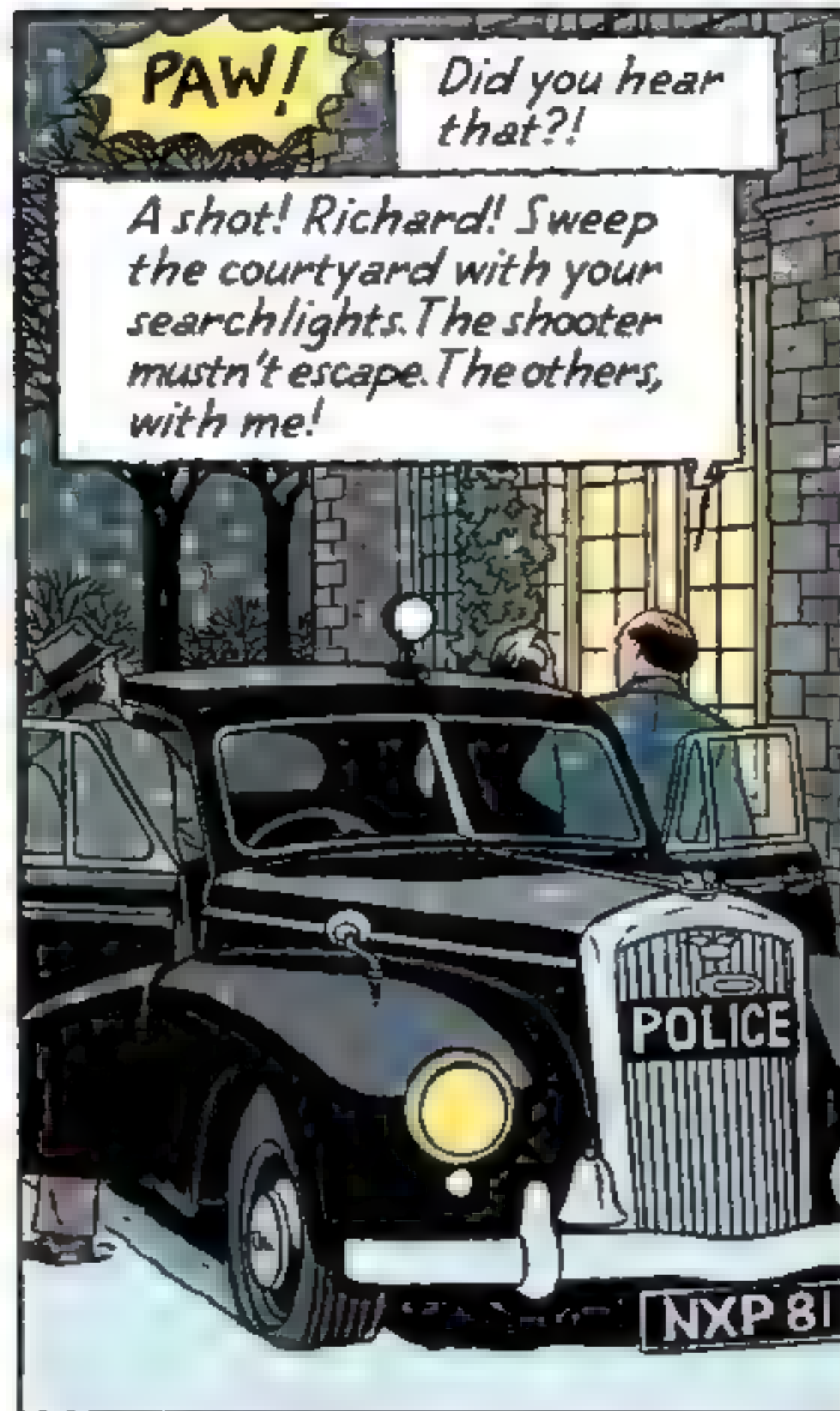


This is pointless... I've already told the M15 people where my part of the manuscript is. Besides, they'll be here any minute.

I'm not here to make you talk. I already know where your pages are hidden.



I'm here to kill you. No mercy for traitors to the Empire.



PAW!

Did you hear that?!

A shot! Richard! Sweep the courtyard with your searchlights. The shooter mustn't escape. The others, with me!



Damn it!

Ha! Ha! Ha! Until next time, gentlemen!



Goodness! How did he manage?

Ha! Ha! Ha!



BLAKE'S MEN HAVE IMMEDIATELY RUSHED TO THE NEIGHBOURING ESTATE.

Lord Devlin! M15! Open the door!



Lord Devlin! Is all... er... Are you all right?

Of course! Why do you ask?

You're sweating profusely...



I was doing a few exercises in my gym while waiting for you... Why have you arrived so late, gentlemen?

We have some bad news for you, Lord Devlin.



IN A FEW WORDS, THE SHAMEFACED M15 AGENT EXPLAINS TO LORD DEVLIN THAT HE AND HIS MEN ARRIVED TOO LATE TO PREVENT THE MURDER OF HIS NEIGHBOUR...

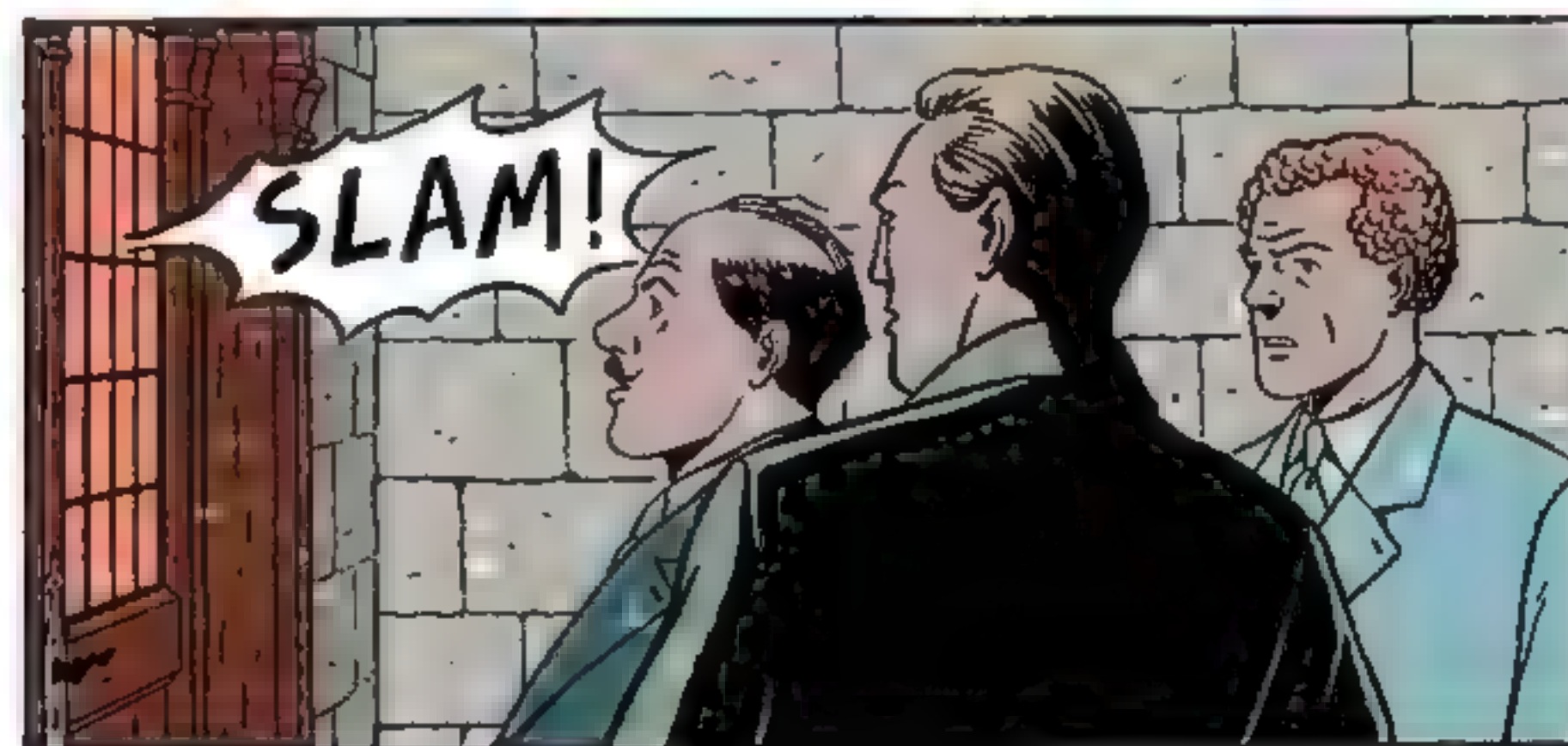
Well, I'm not impressed, gentlemen! I can see that I'm going to have to protect myself, as well as...



...as well as...



Tomorrow I'll leave for Oxford. And I advise you not to try and stop me!



SLAM!



Huh! What terrible manners!

You two, stay here and keep watch. Richard! Take me back to Lord Rathmore's. We'll call an ambulance and I'll make my report to Captain Blake.



TWENTY MINUTES AFTER THE TRAGIC EVENTS AT HIGH WYCOMBE...

Some news at last.

Driing!
Driing!
Driing!

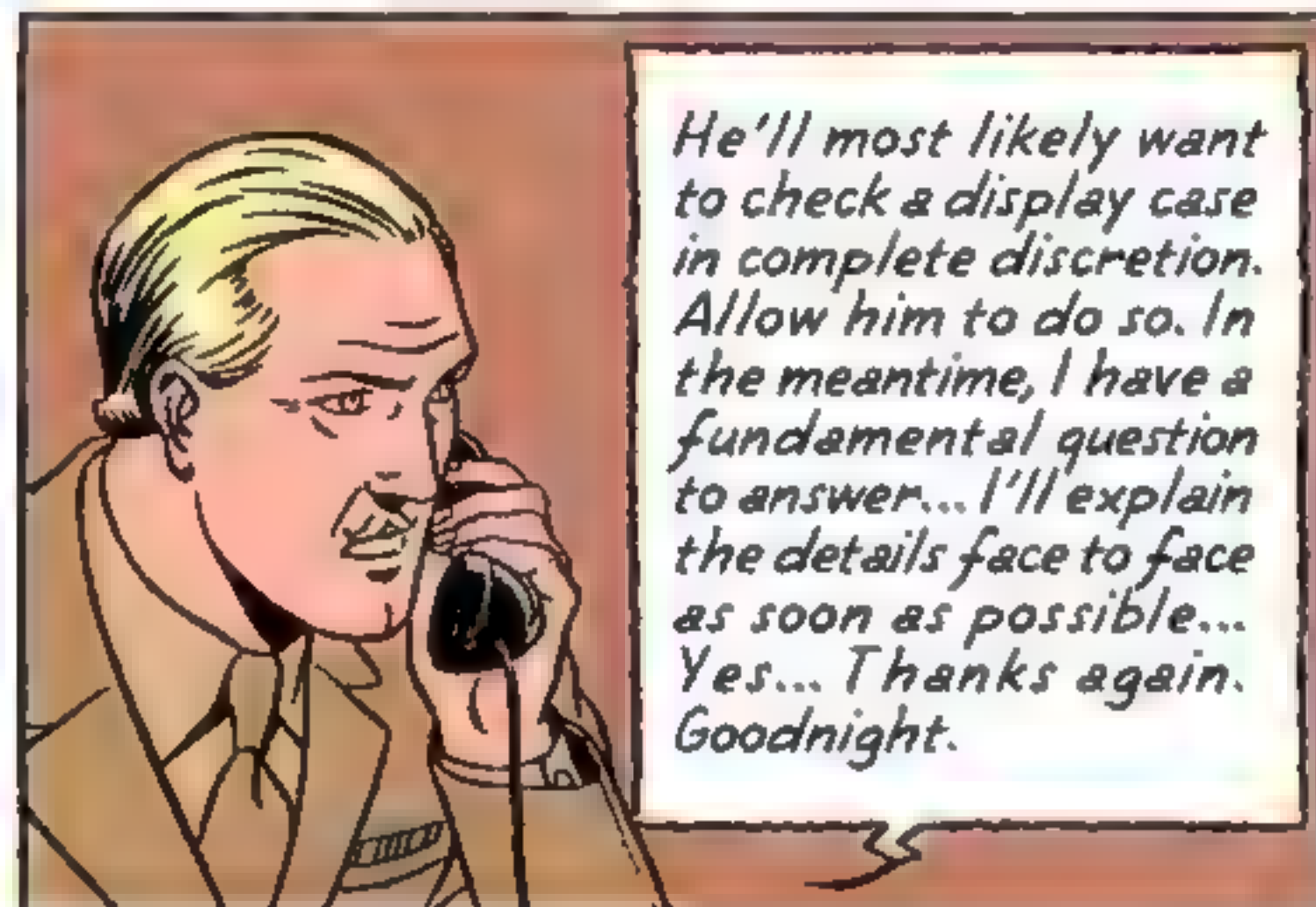


QUICKLY THE CAPTAIN GIVES HIS FRIEND A SUMMARY OF RECENT EVENTS AS REPORTED TO HIM BY HIS AGENTS.

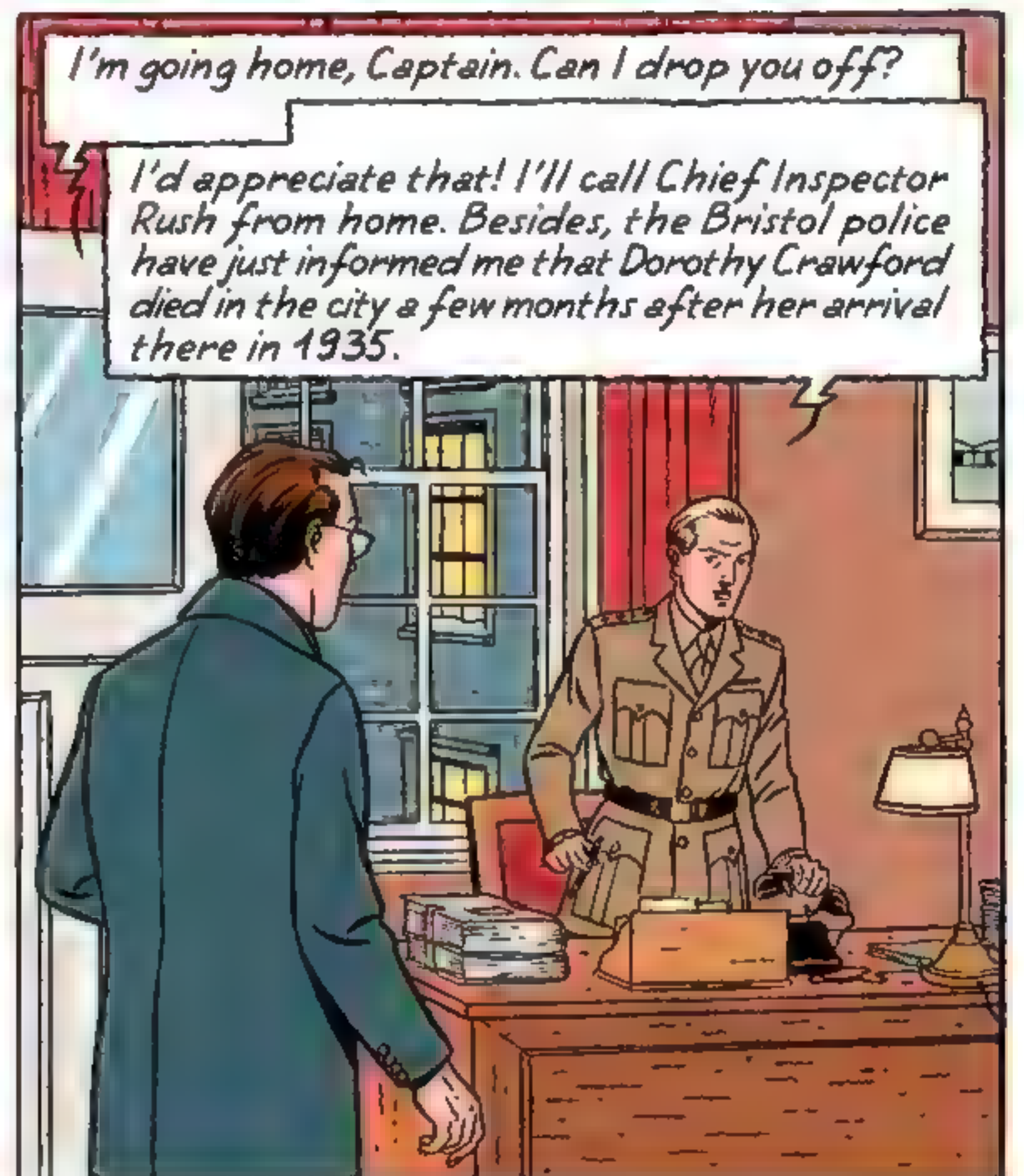
We were hampered by misfortune. If there hadn't been such a heavy snowfall, my men would have arrived in time to protect Lord Rathmore! I should have stayed with him until they were in position...



Come now, Francis... Get some rest. I'll be there to welcome Lord Devlin tomorrow. I'll try to calm him down until you arrive.

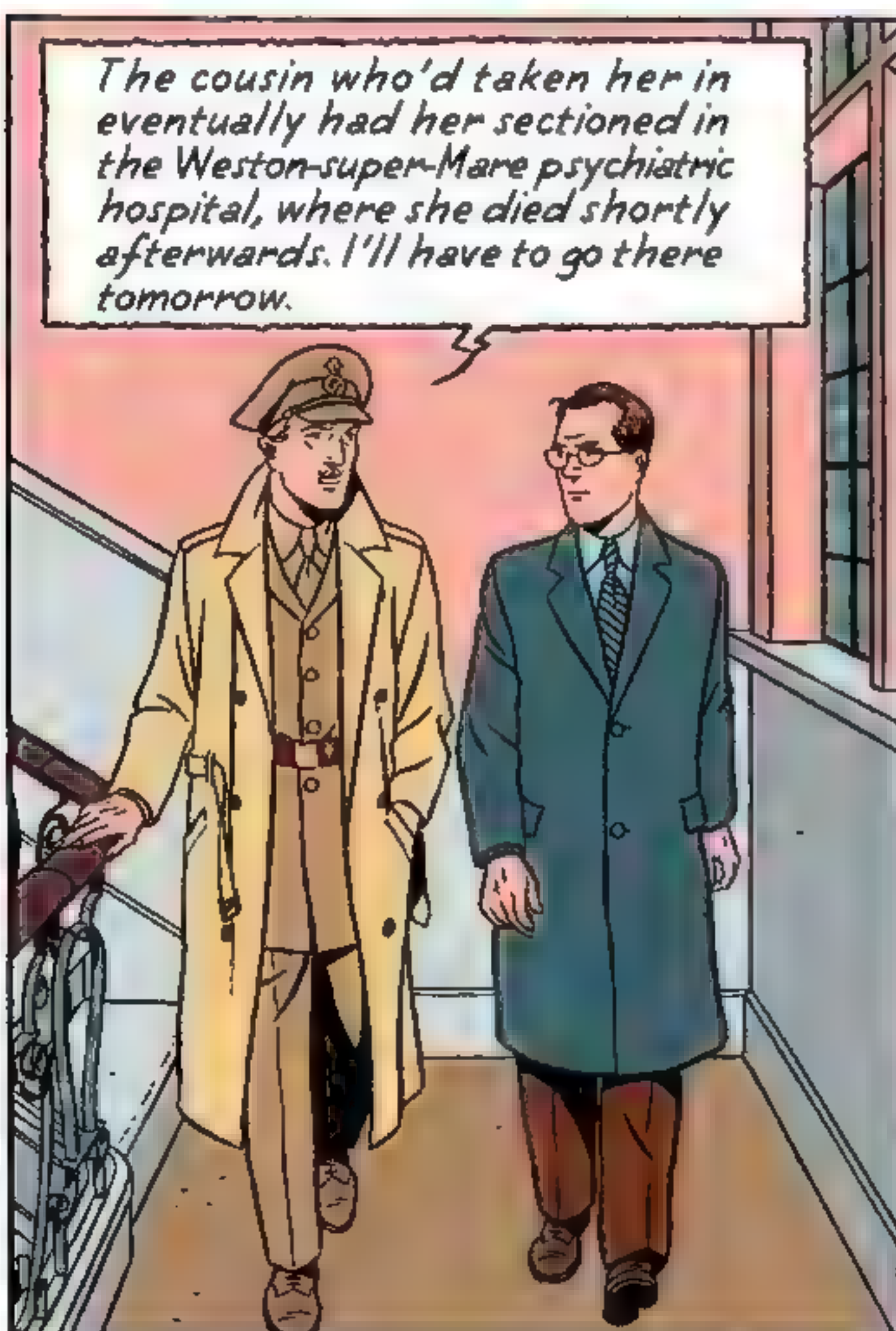


He'll most likely want to check a display case in complete discretion. Allow him to do so. In the meantime, I have a fundamental question to answer... I'll explain the details face to face as soon as possible... Yes... Thanks again. Goodnight.

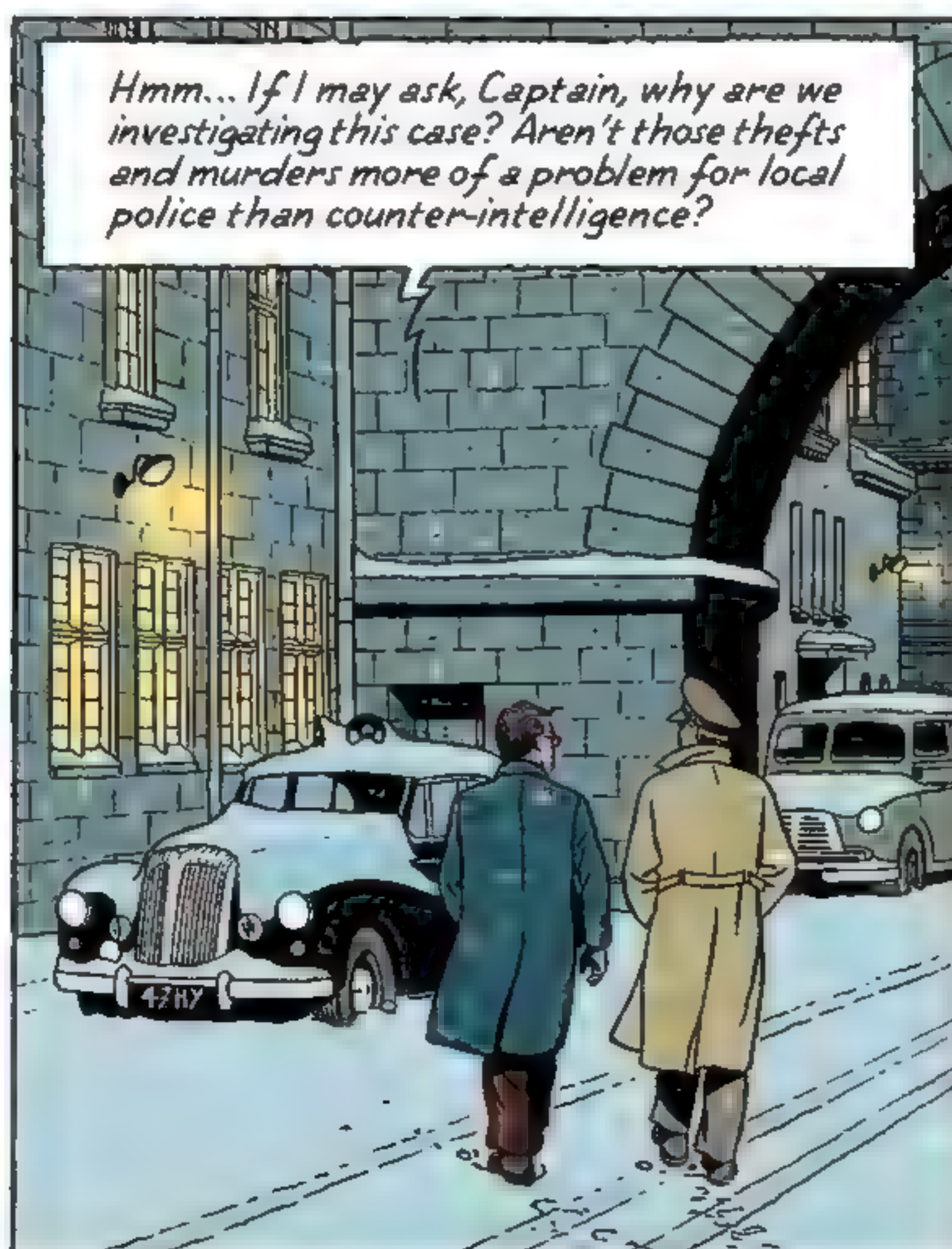


I'm going home, Captain. Can I drop you off?

I'd appreciate that! I'll call Chief Inspector Rush from home. Besides, the Bristol police have just informed me that Dorothy Crawford died in the city a few months after her arrival there in 1935.



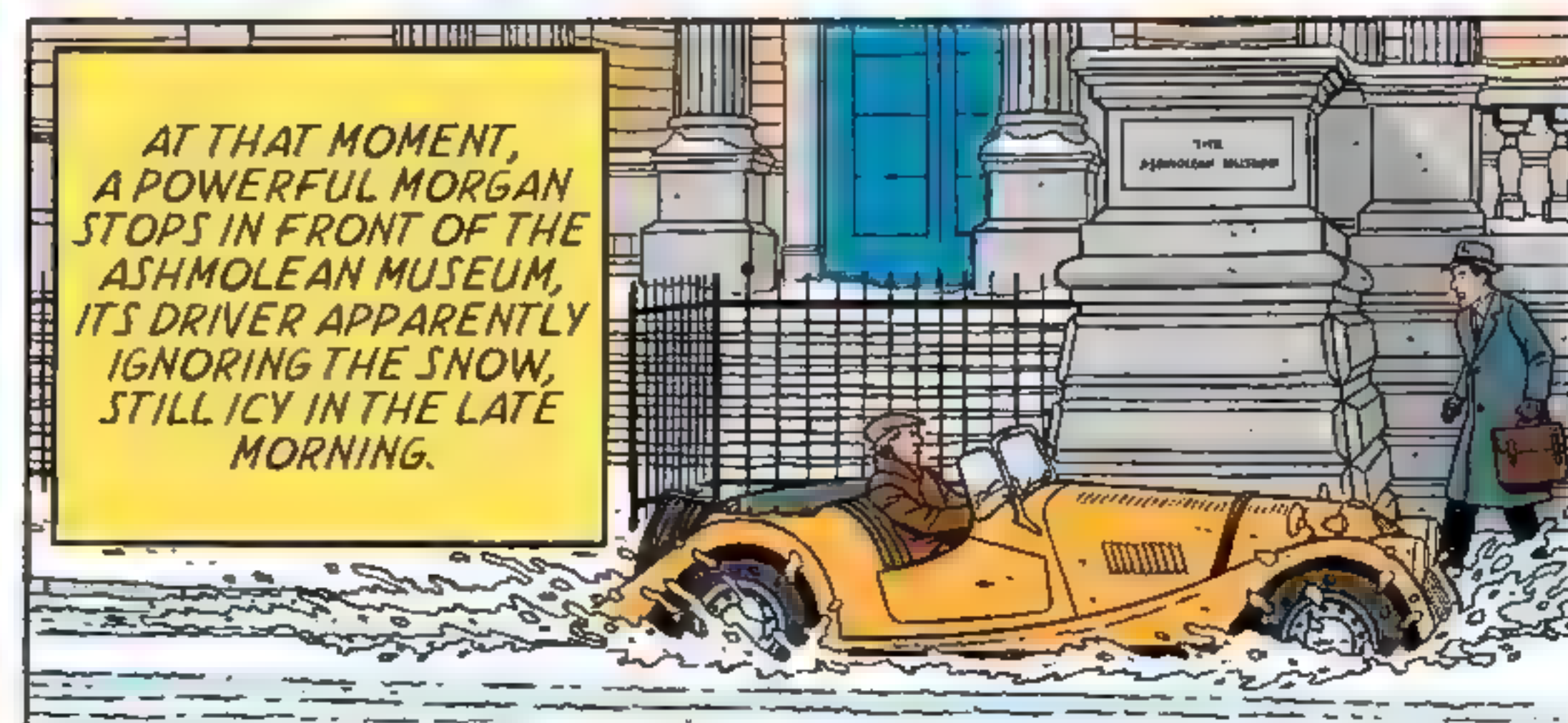
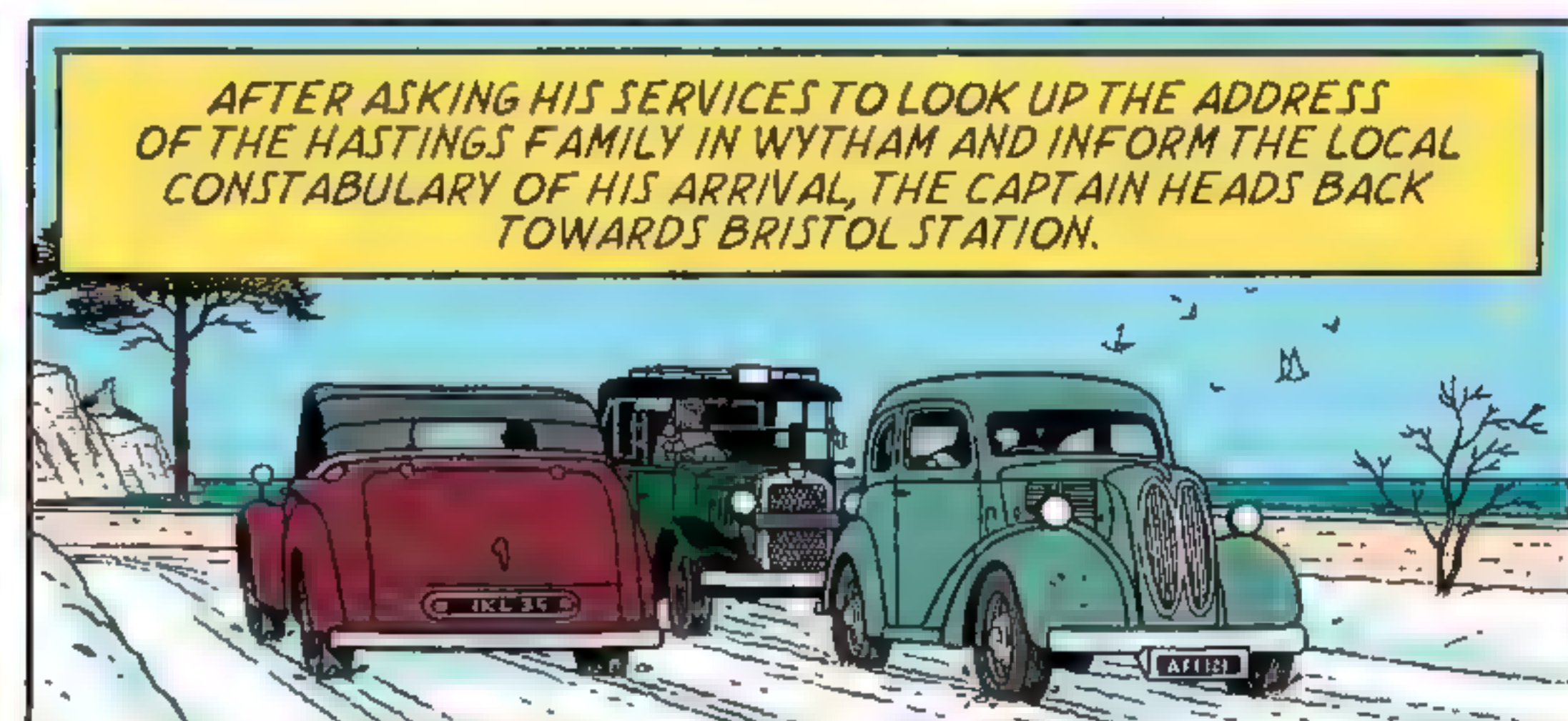
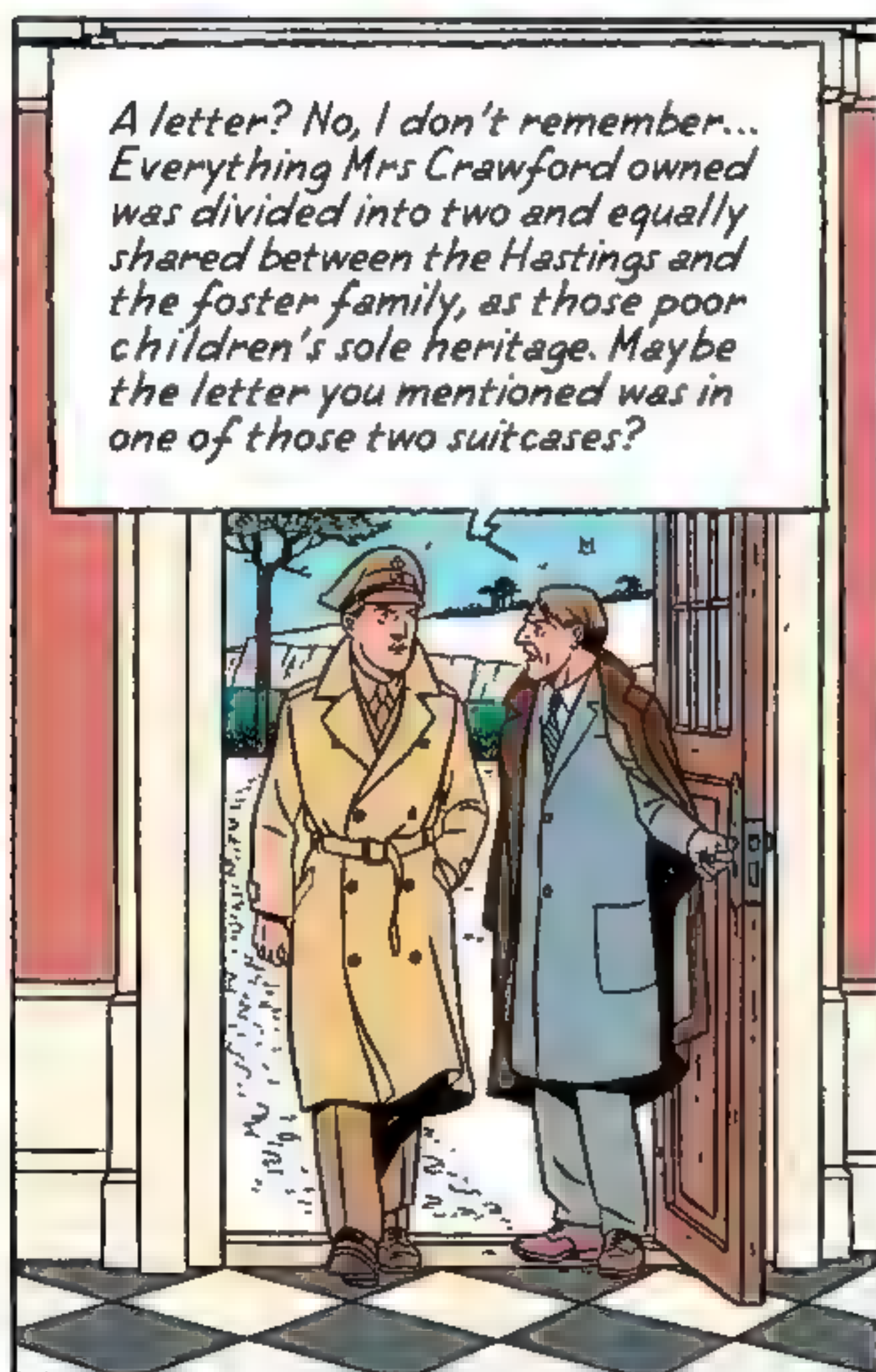
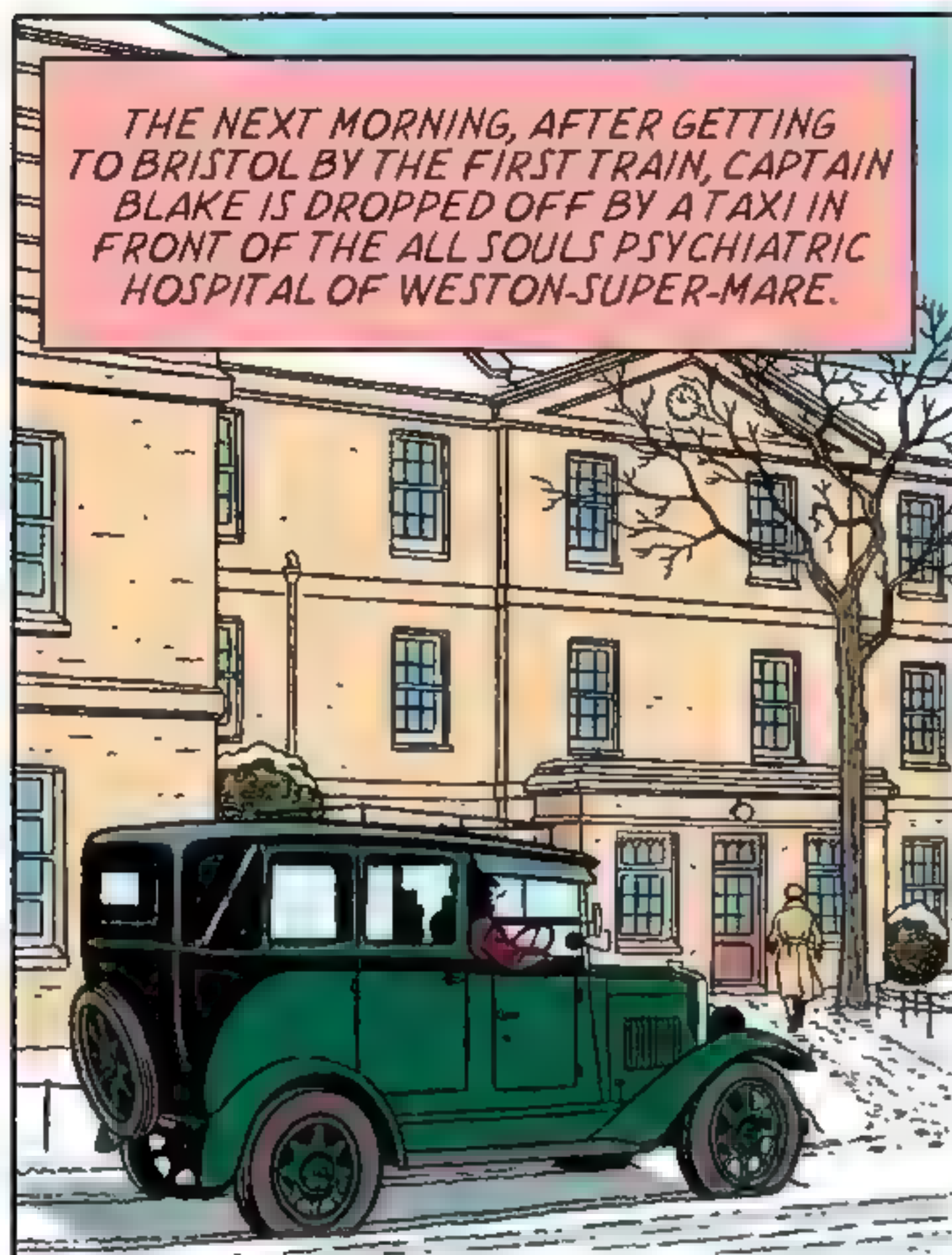
The cousin who'd taken her in eventually had her sectioned in the Weston-super-Mare psychiatric hospital, where she died shortly afterwards. I'll have to go there tomorrow.

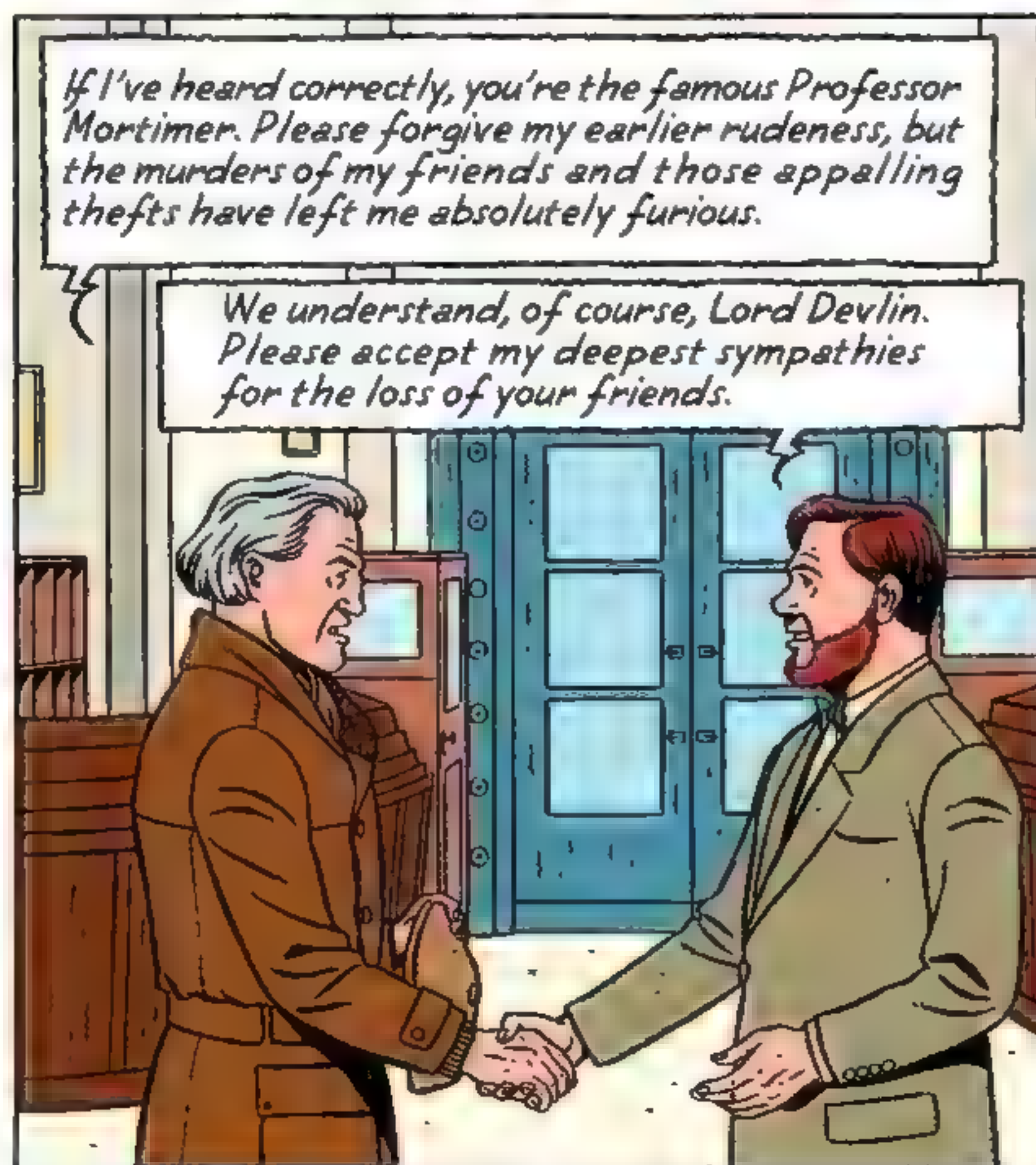
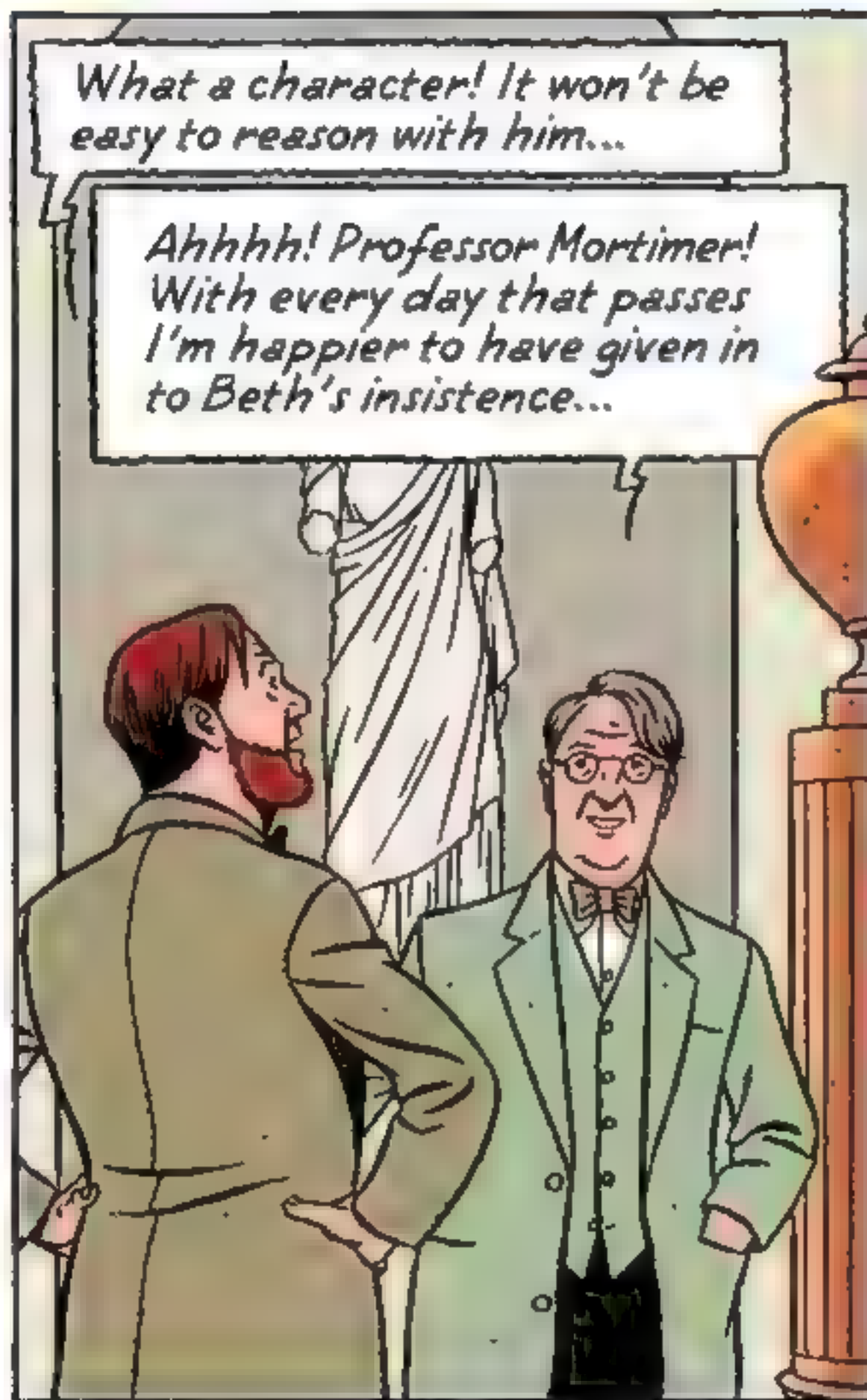
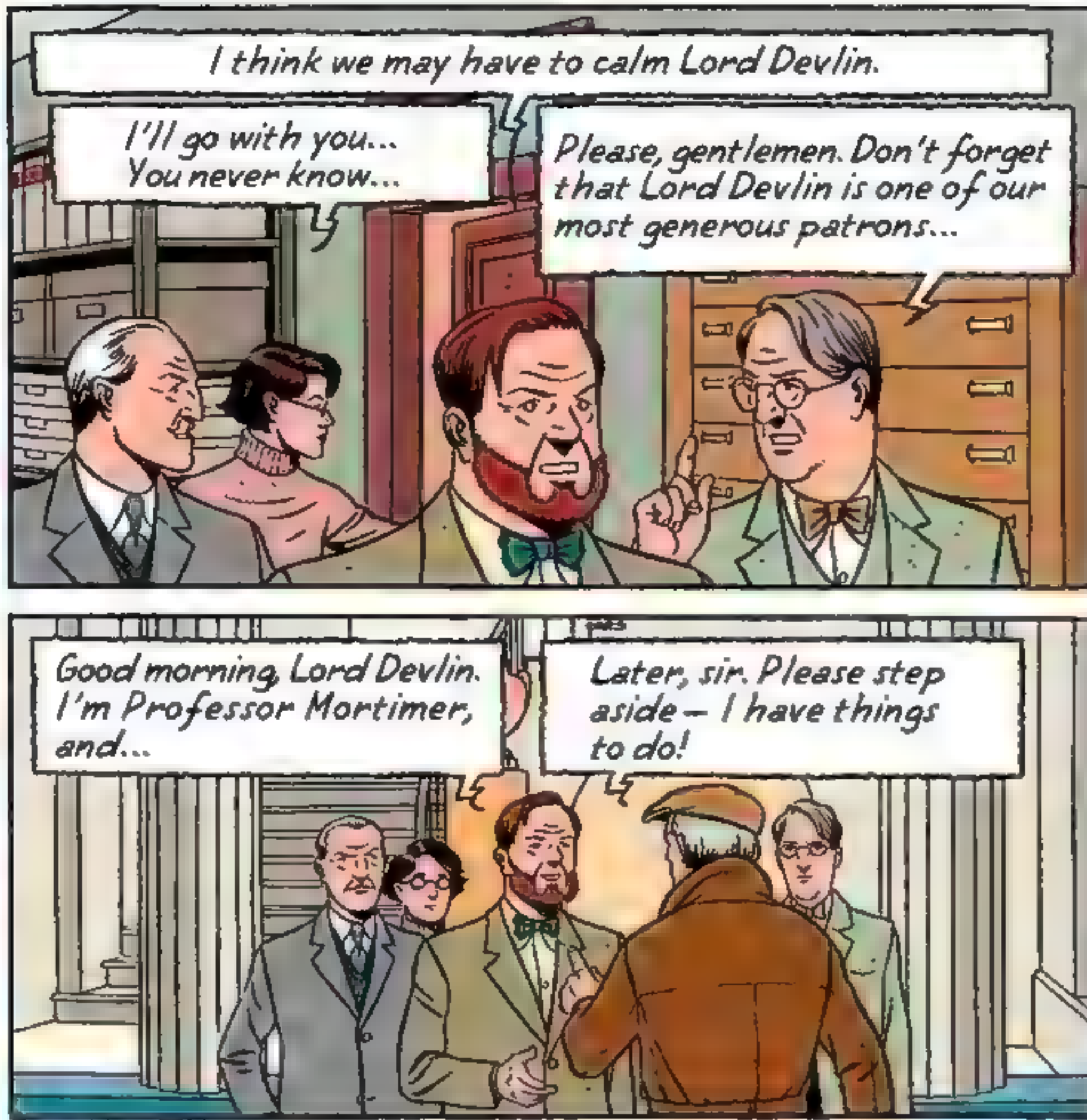
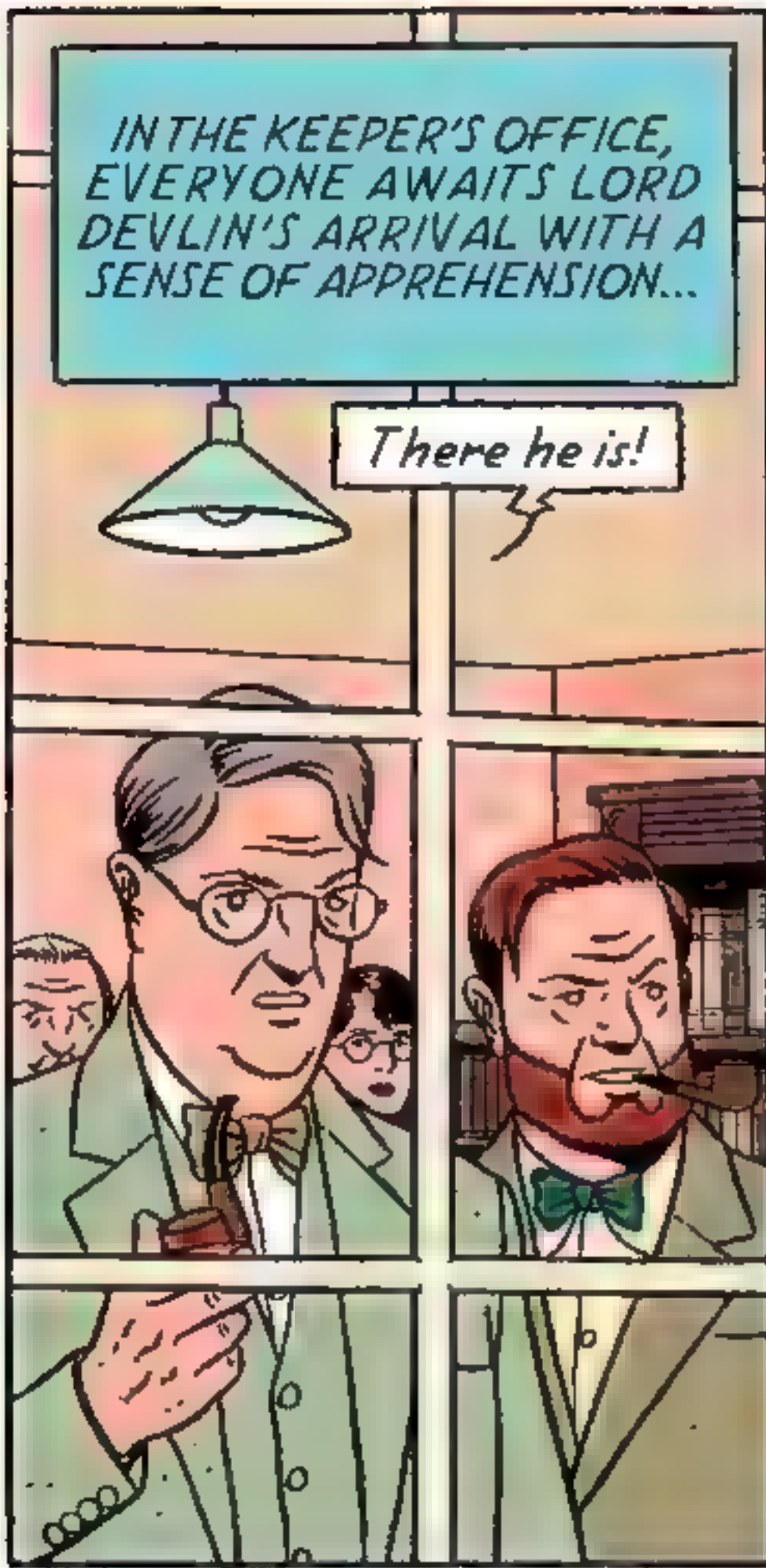


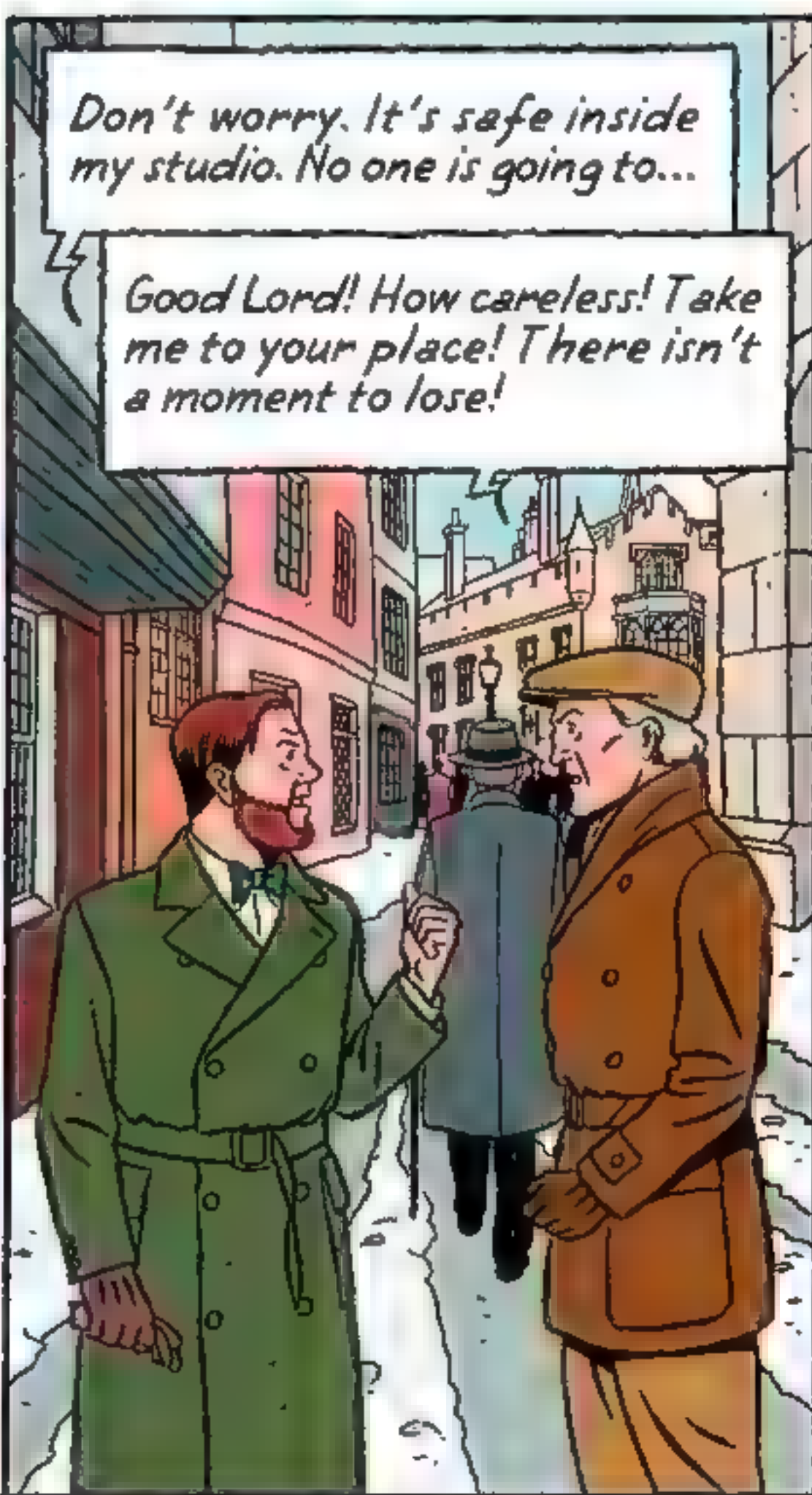
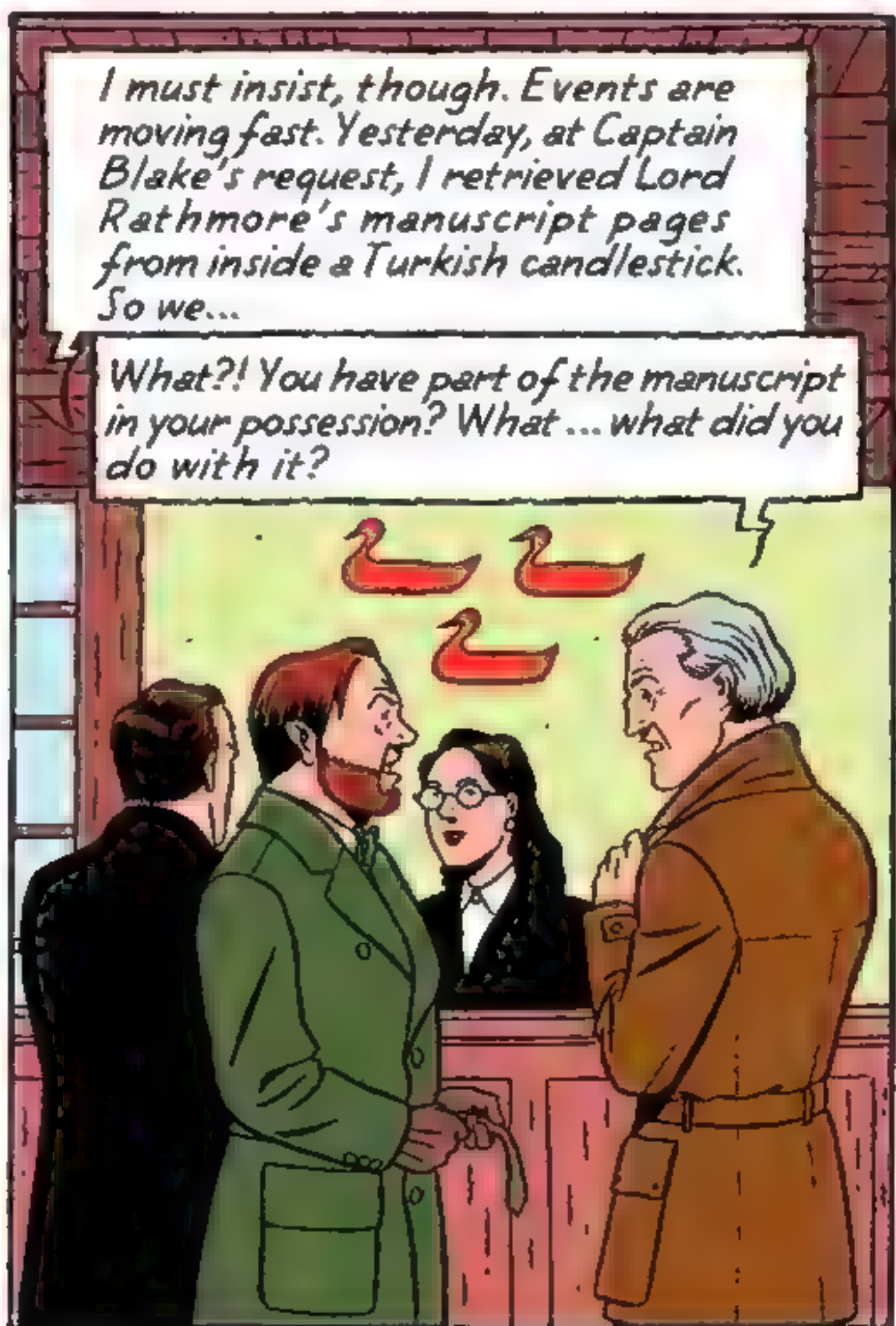
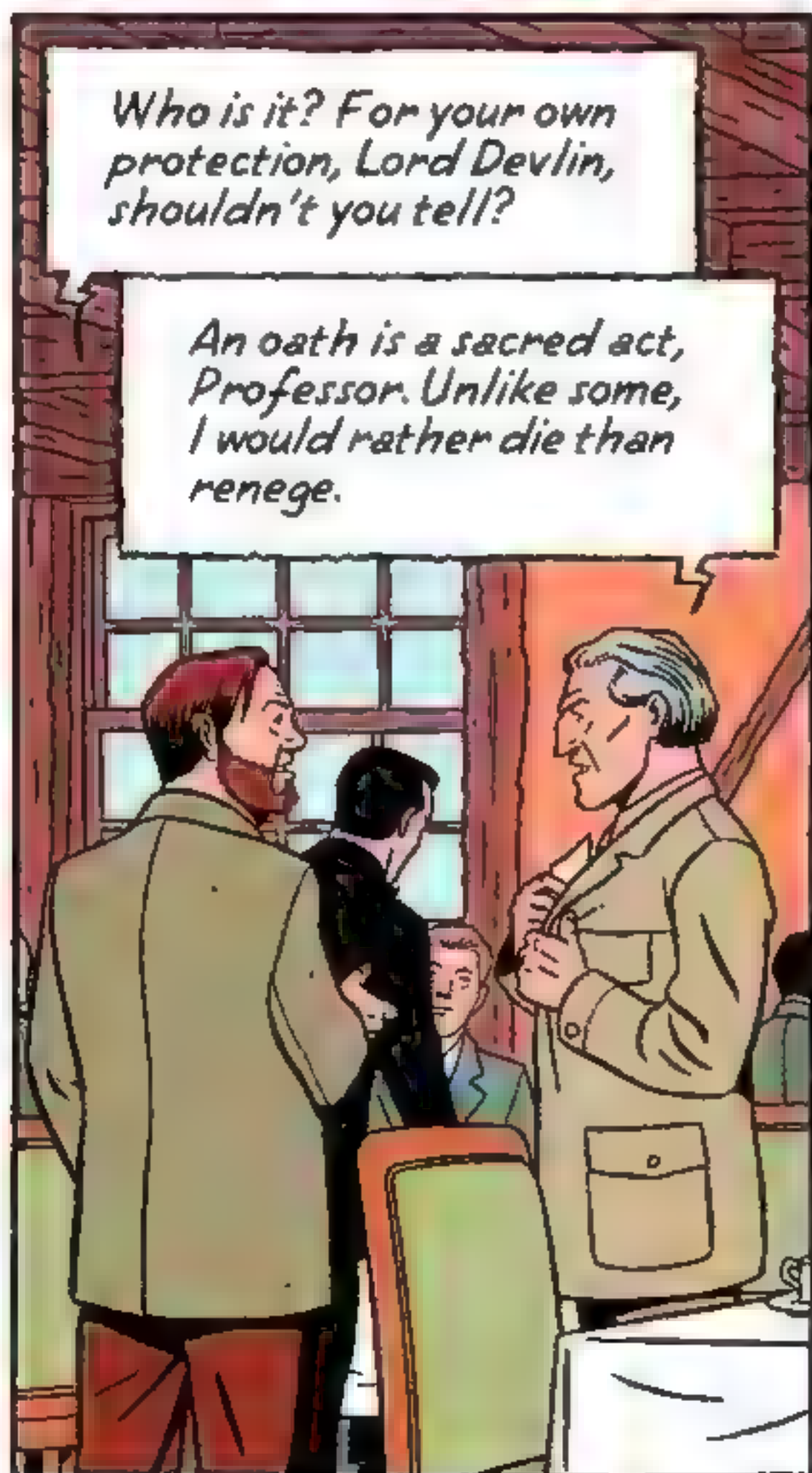
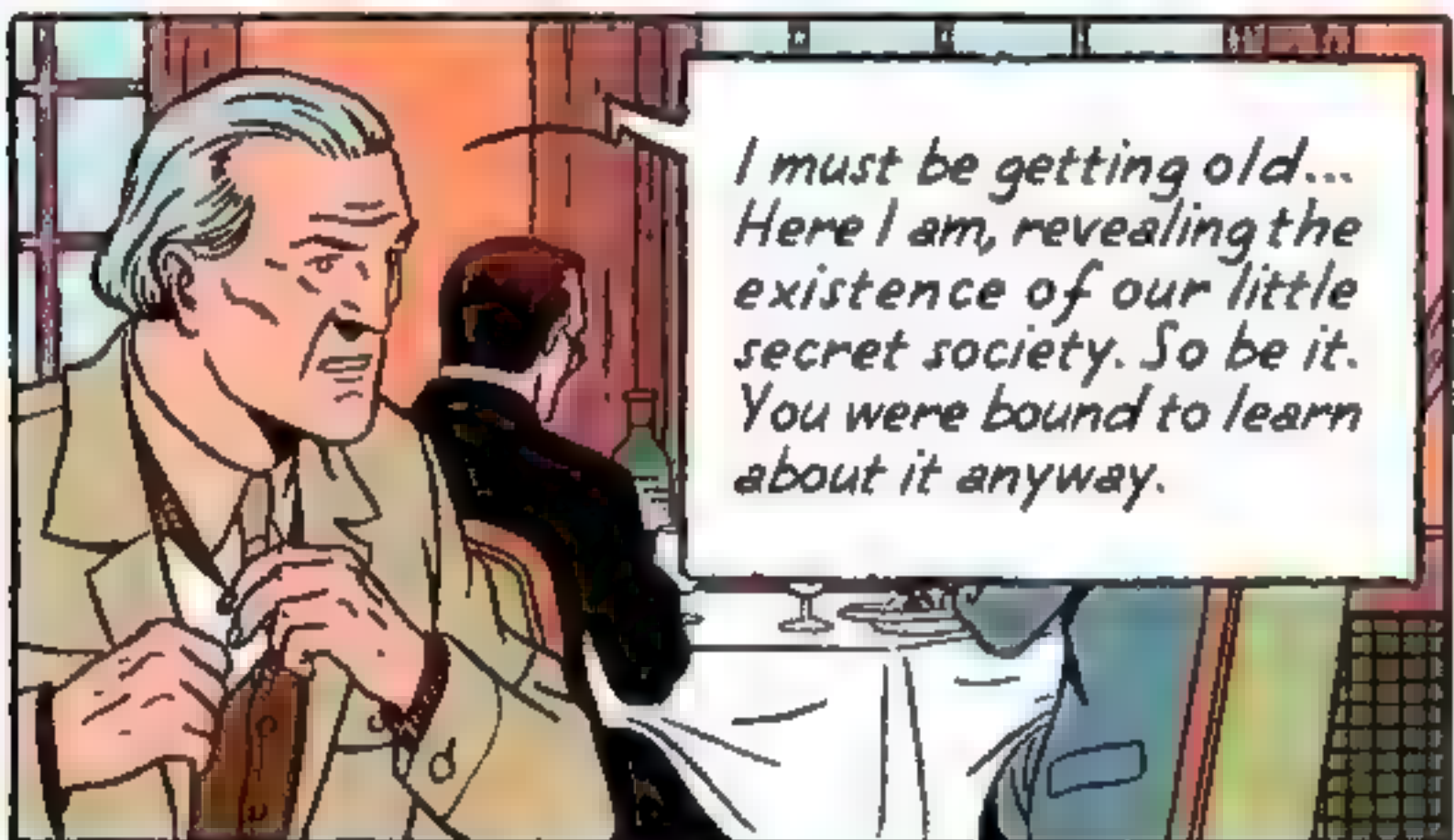
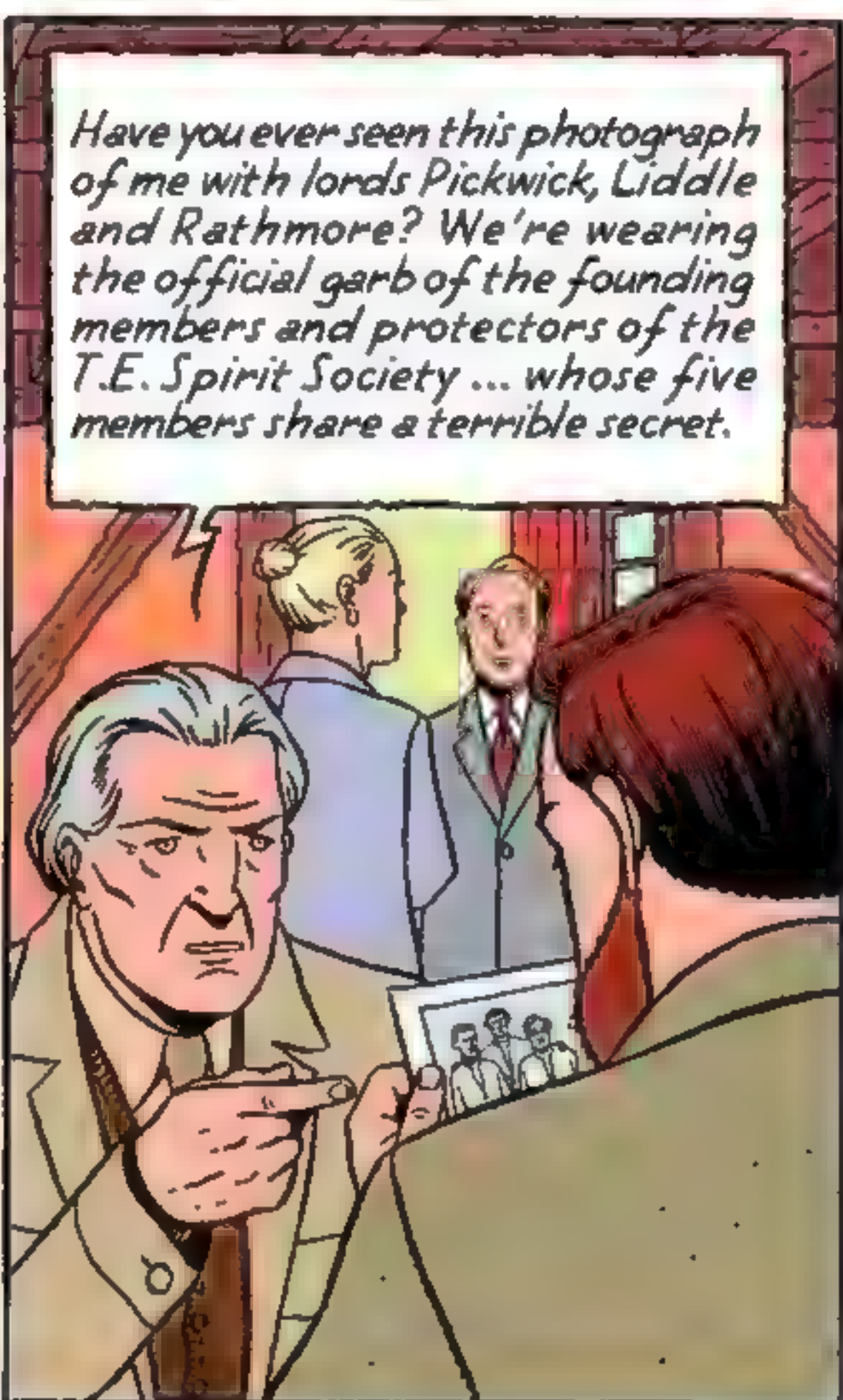
Hmm... If I may ask, Captain, why are we investigating this case? Aren't those thefts and murders more of a problem for local police than counter-intelligence?

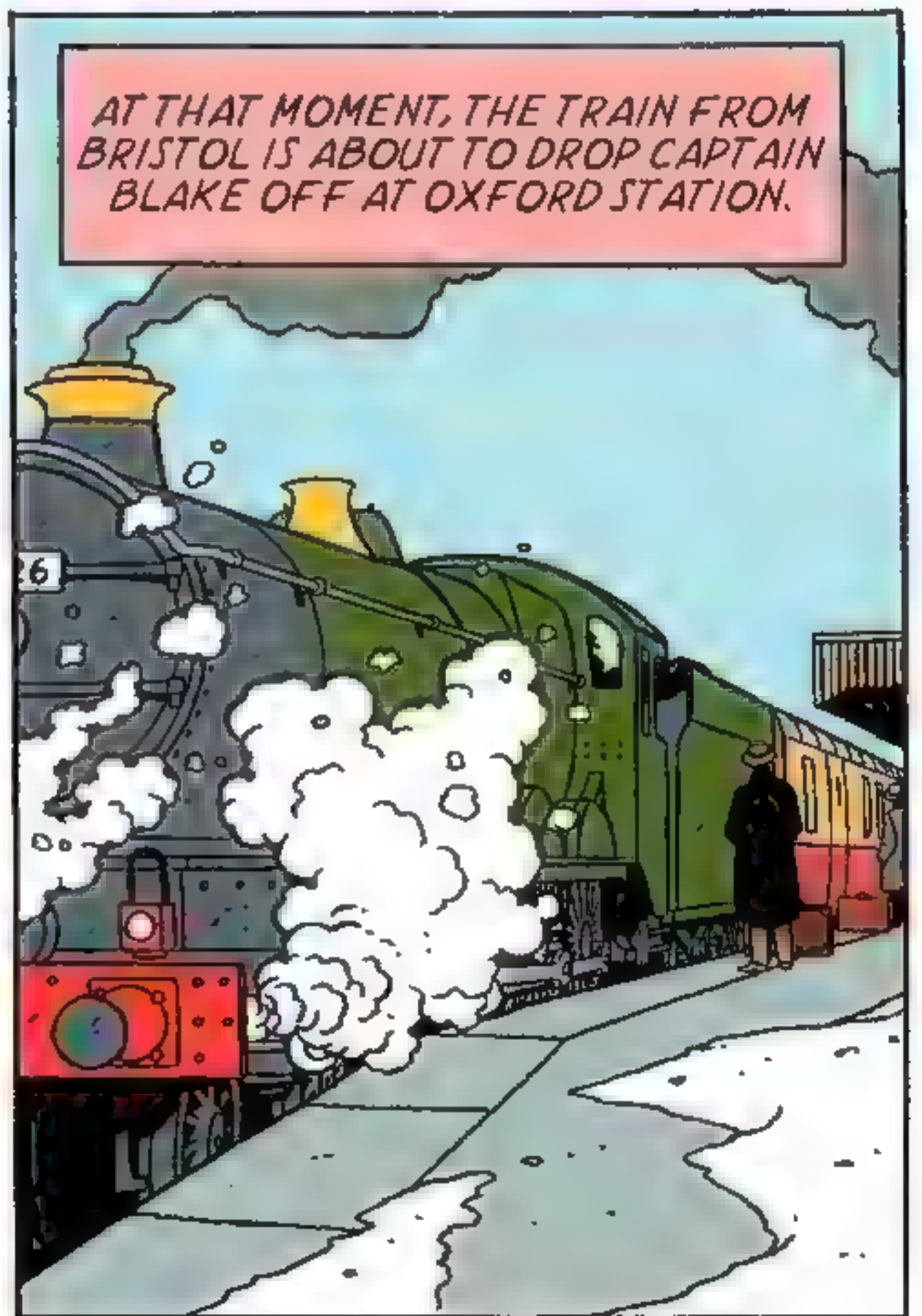
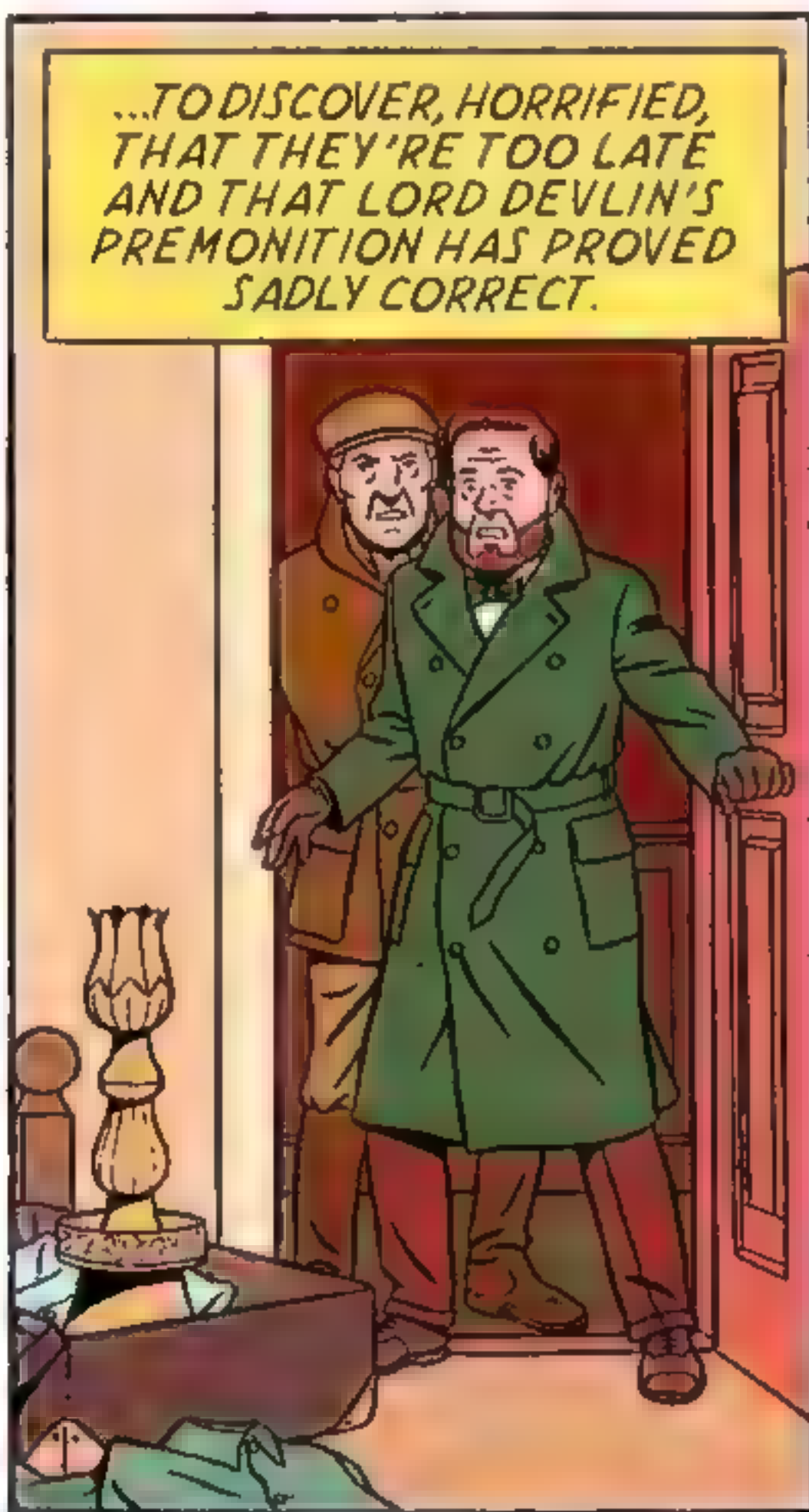
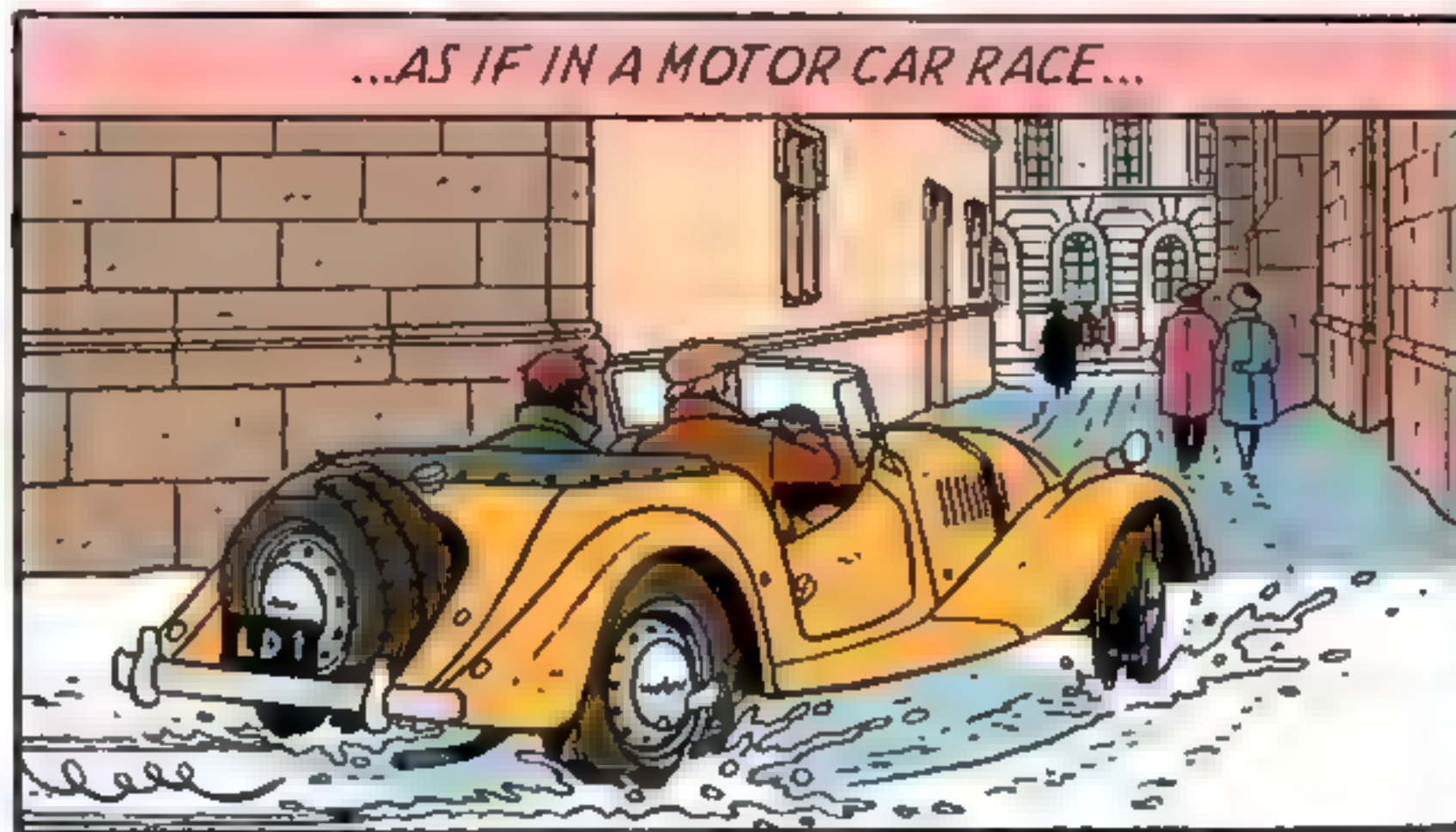
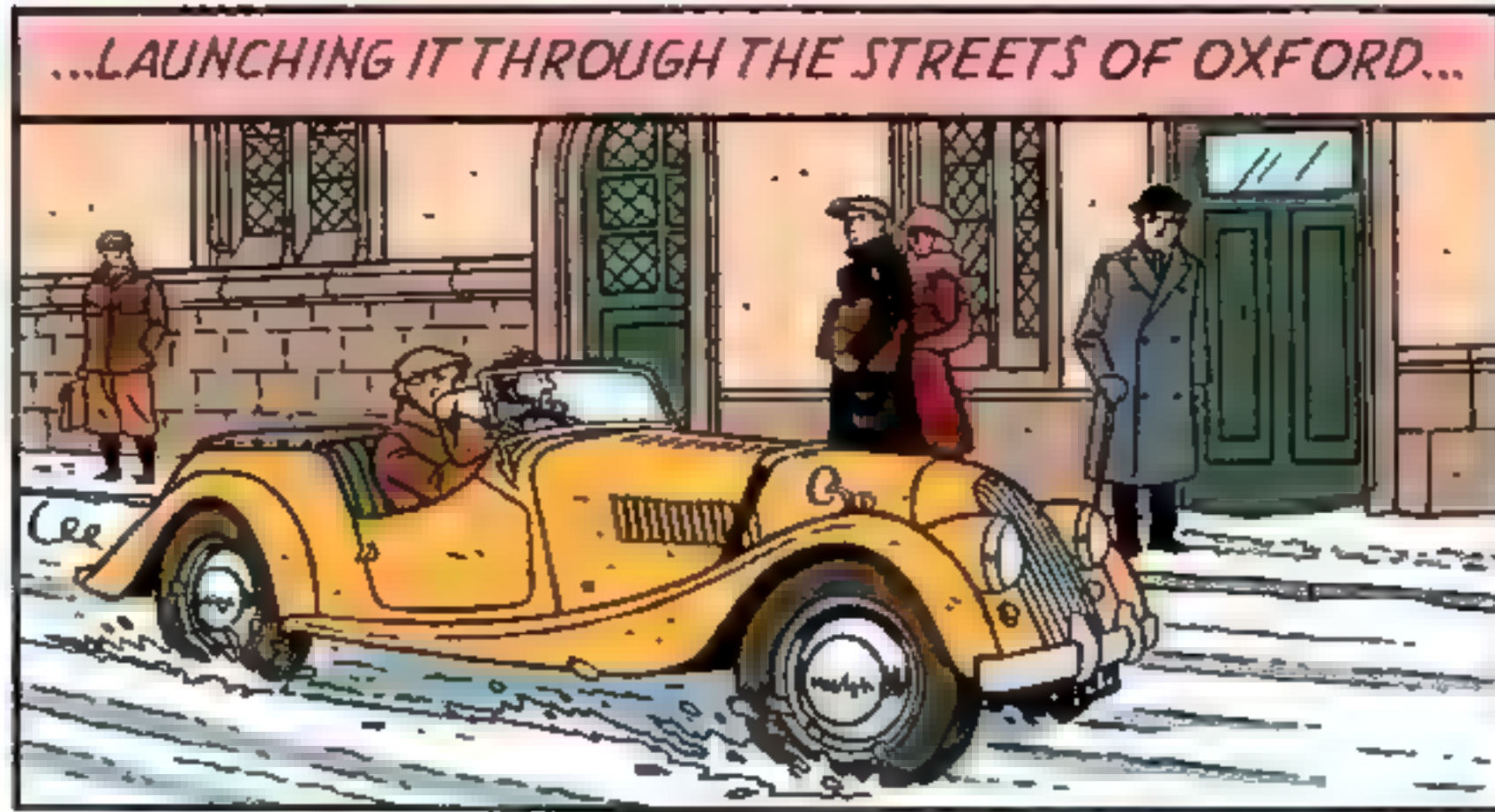
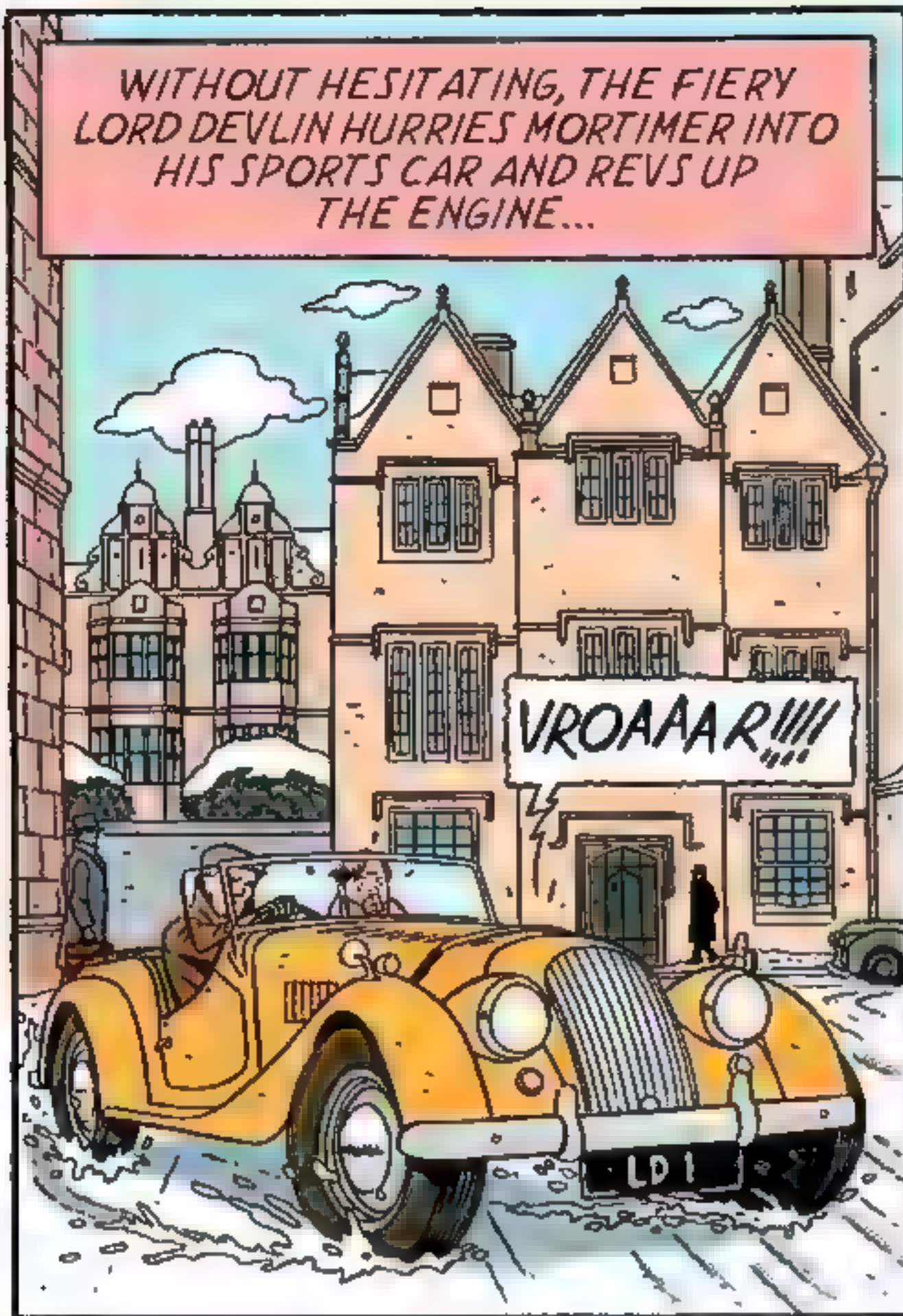


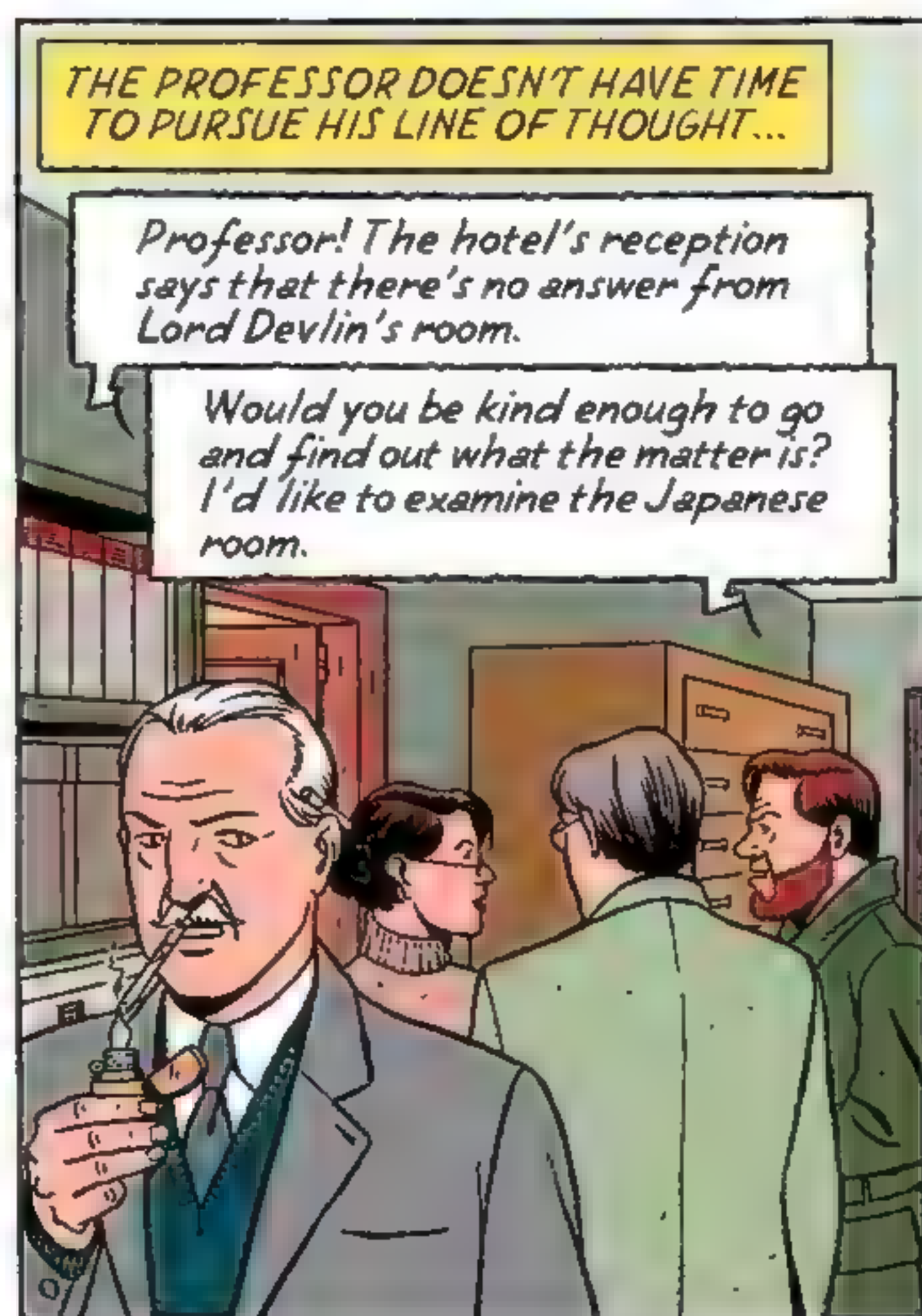
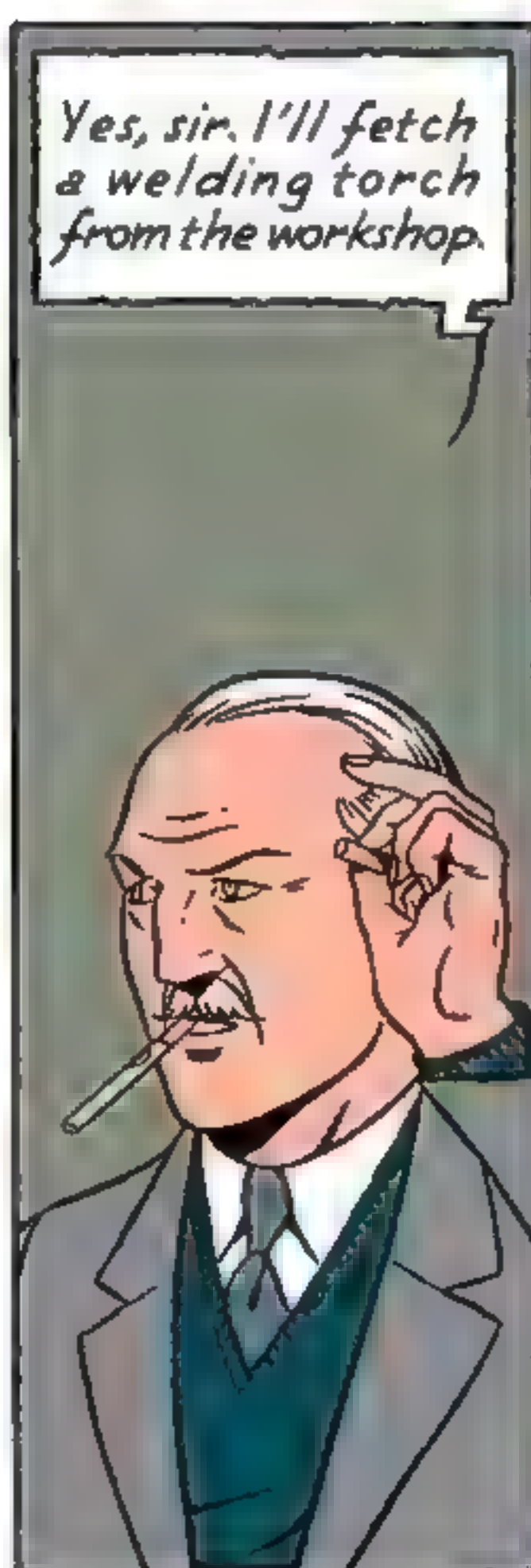
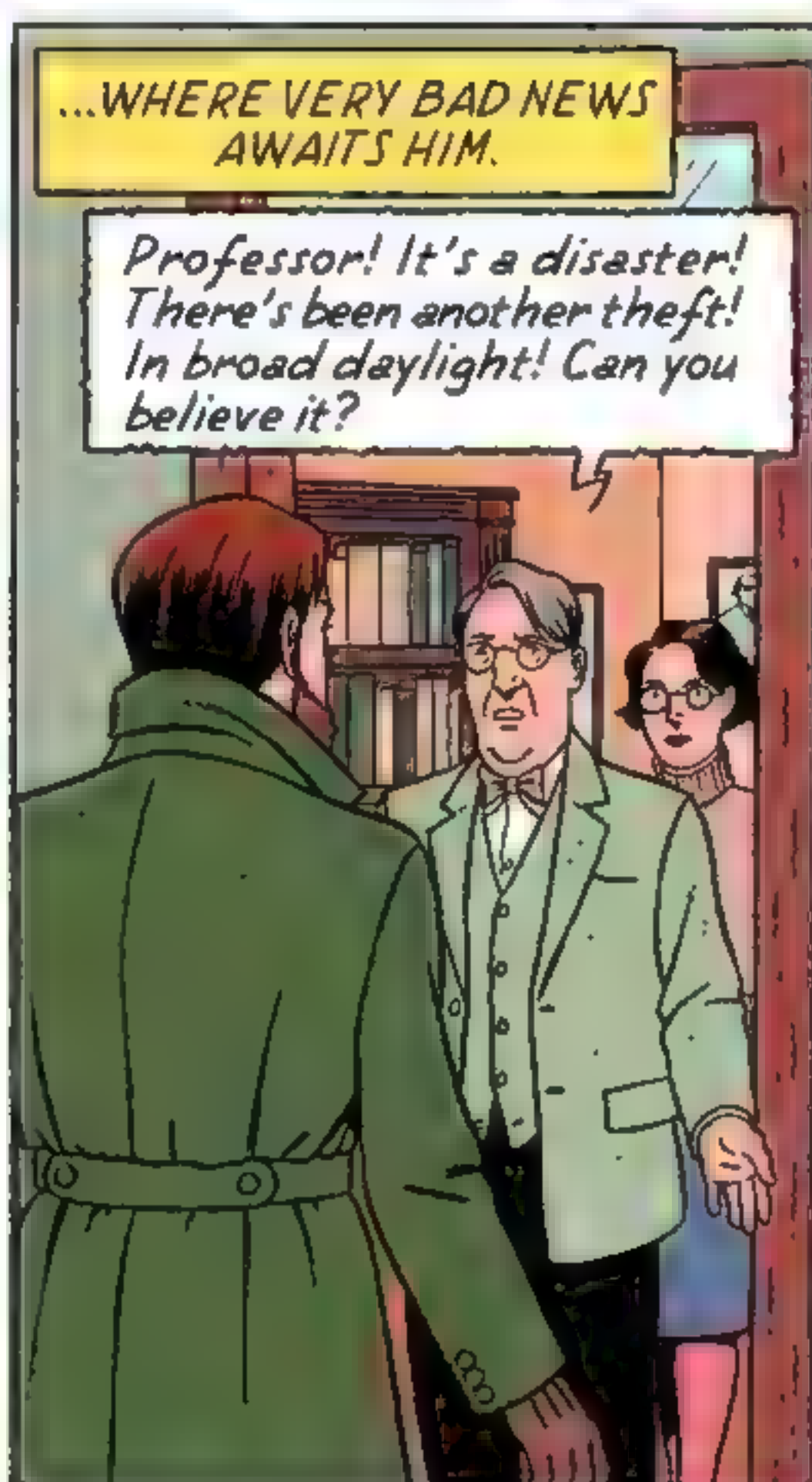
That would be true of a normal investigation, David. Unfortunately, I'm personally involved in this affair. And believe me, I'm not happy about it.







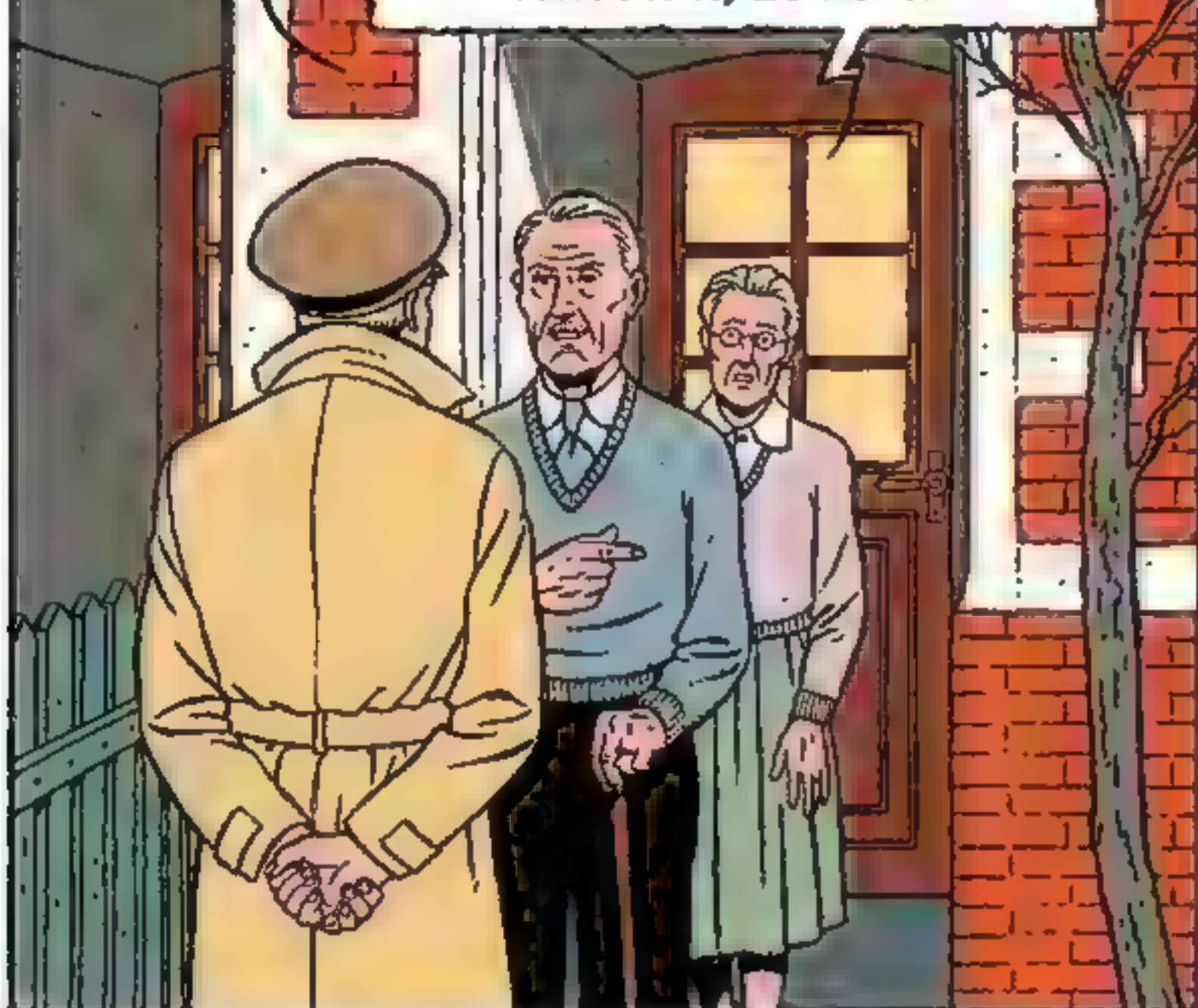




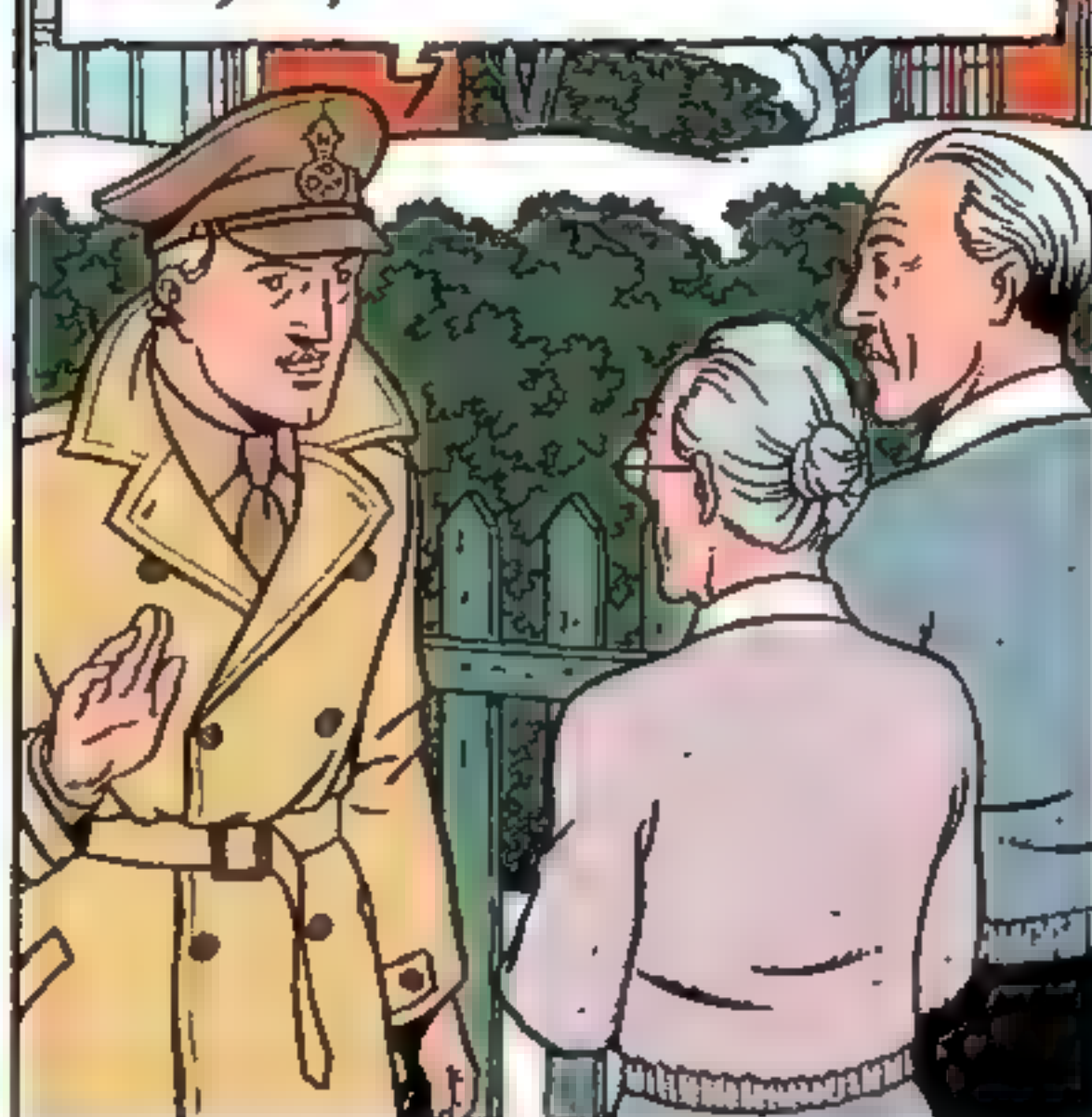
HAVING INTRODUCED HIMSELF, BLAKE ASKS MR HASTINGS IF HE CAN SPEAK TO HIS ADOPTED SON, JOHN.

Well, you see ... my son is a student at Mansfield College. He's been living there since last year.

What is it, Edward?

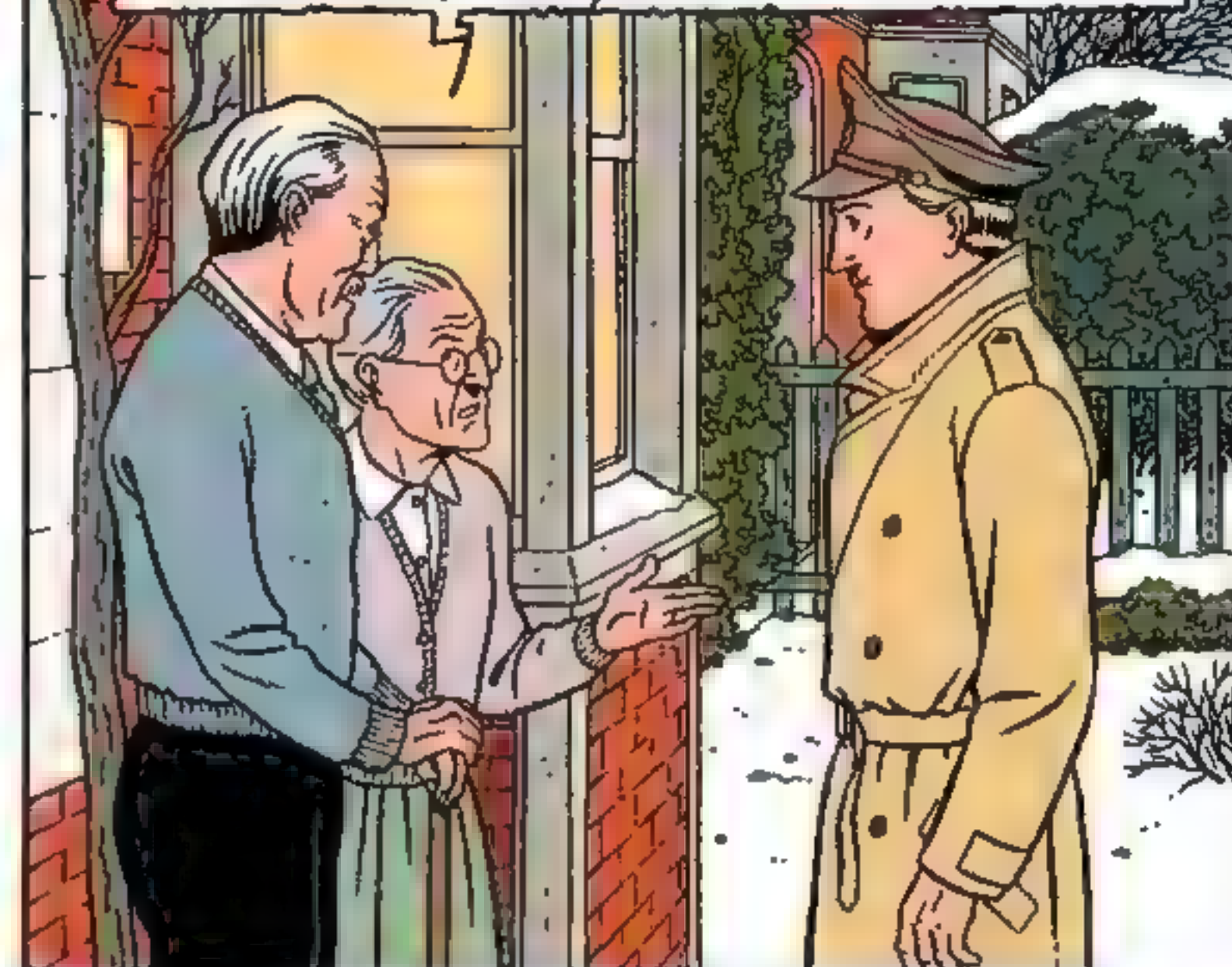


Don't worry, madam. I have only one question. You may find it strange, but it's urgent. Do you have any memory of a letter that John's natural mother, Dorothy Crawford, would have left among his effects, to be opened by her son when he reached 20? Think carefully.

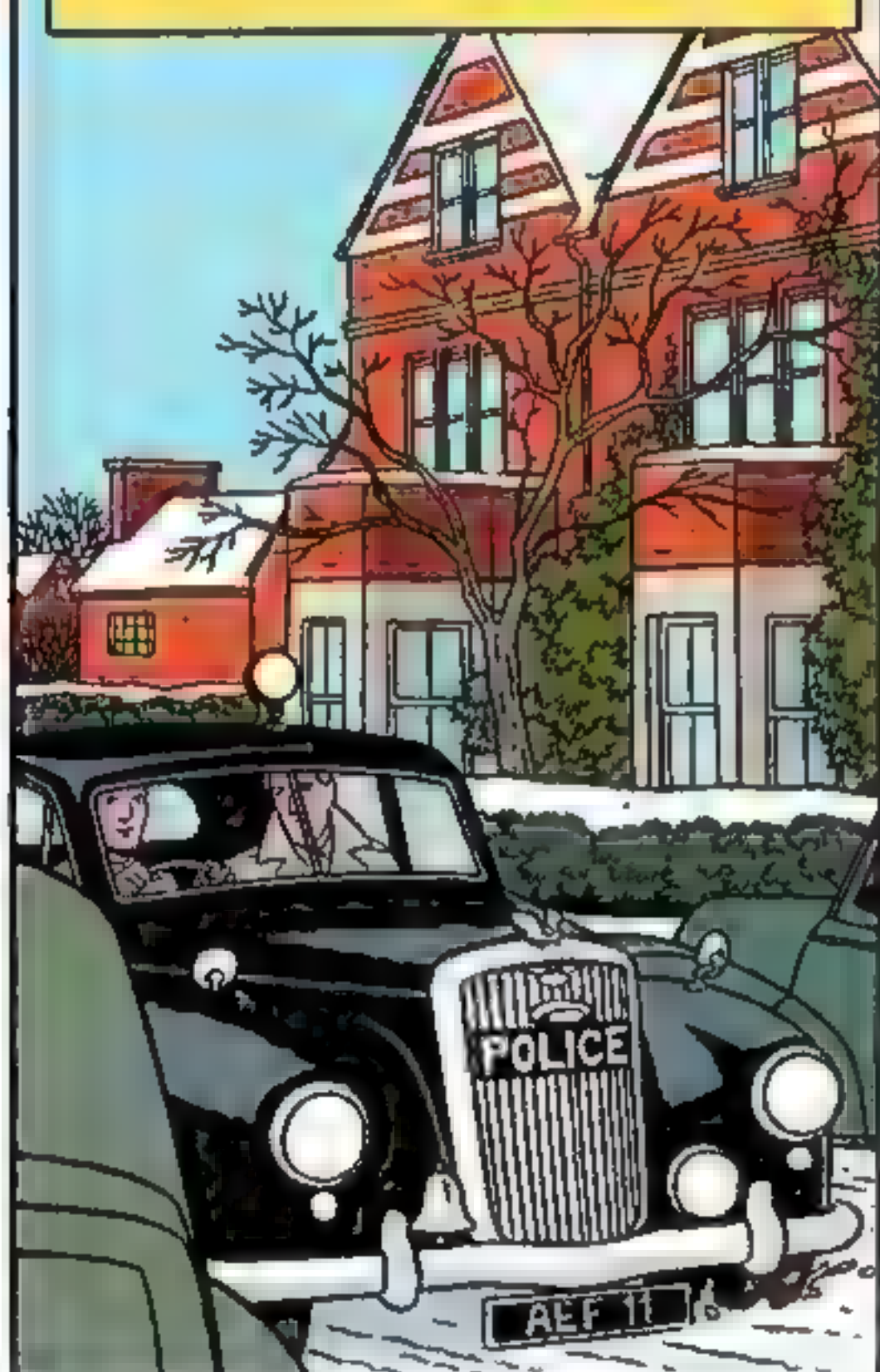


A letter from...? No... Really, I don't recall...

As had been agreed, on his 20th birthday we gave him a small suitcase containing his mother's possessions. There were only a few pictures and some articles of women's clothing that John actually asked me to throw away. What could our son have done with all that, I ask you?



AFTER REQUESTING THEIR SON'S ADDRESS, THE CAPTAIN TAKES HIS LEAVE FROM MR AND MRS HASTINGS...



...TO REACH, SOME 20 MINUTES LATER, THE BOYS' DORMITORY AT MANSFIELD COLLEGE.



John Hastings? Good morning. I'm Captain Blake of the British Security Service. May I ask you a few questions?

Er... Yes... Of course.



You recently received some personal effects of your mother's. Did you find among them a letter from your biological father, Alister Crawford? It's very important.

No... I don't think so... And I'd remember, wouldn't I?



DELIBERATELY IGNORING THE YOUNG MAN'S FLUSTER, BLAKE CHANGES THE SUBJECT.

I'm sure you would, yes... Is that your roommate? Is he a psychology student like you?

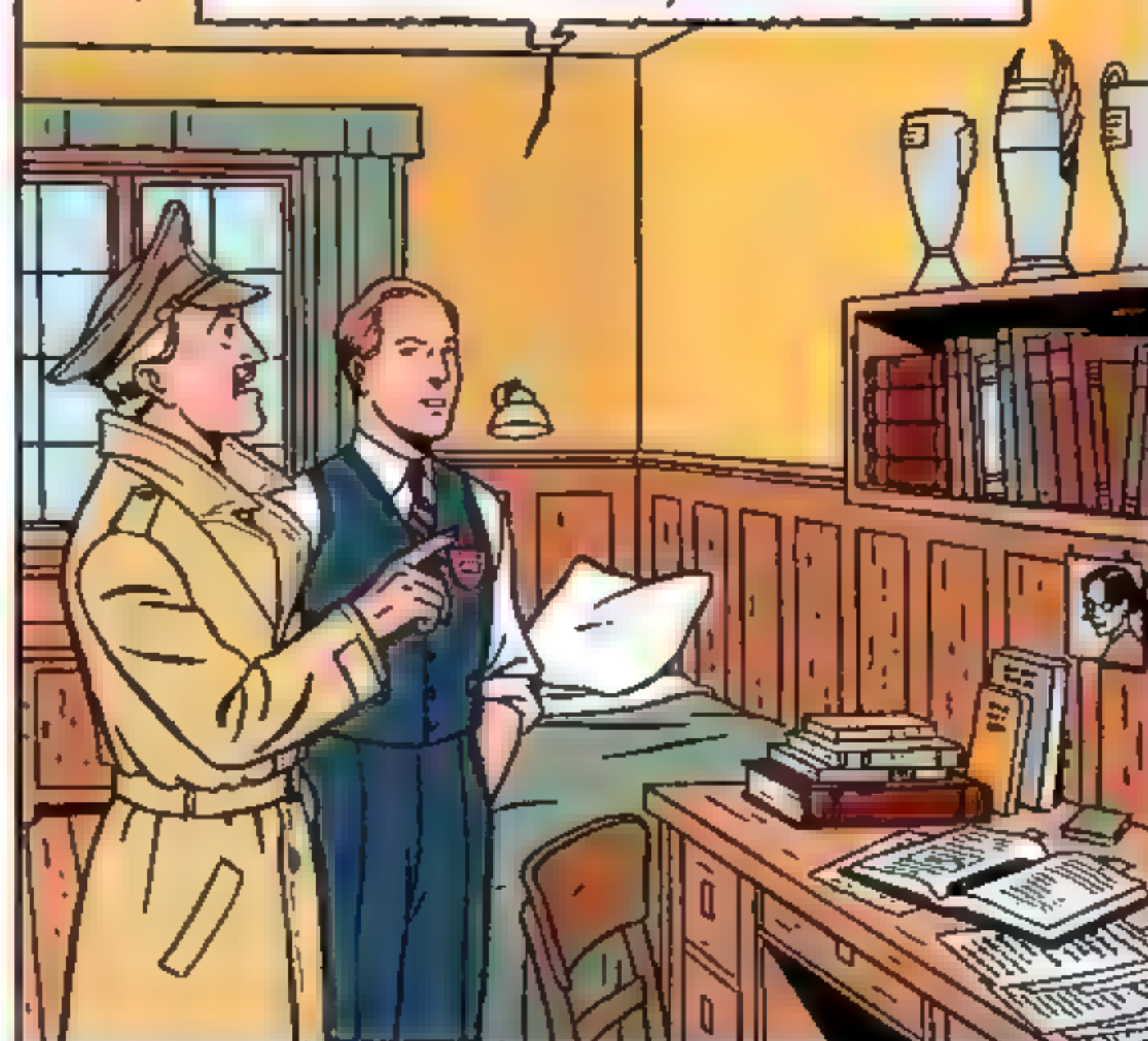


Yes. That's him playing Justice Shallow in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. He's an excellent actor. I'm more of a sports aficionado myself, especially cycling.



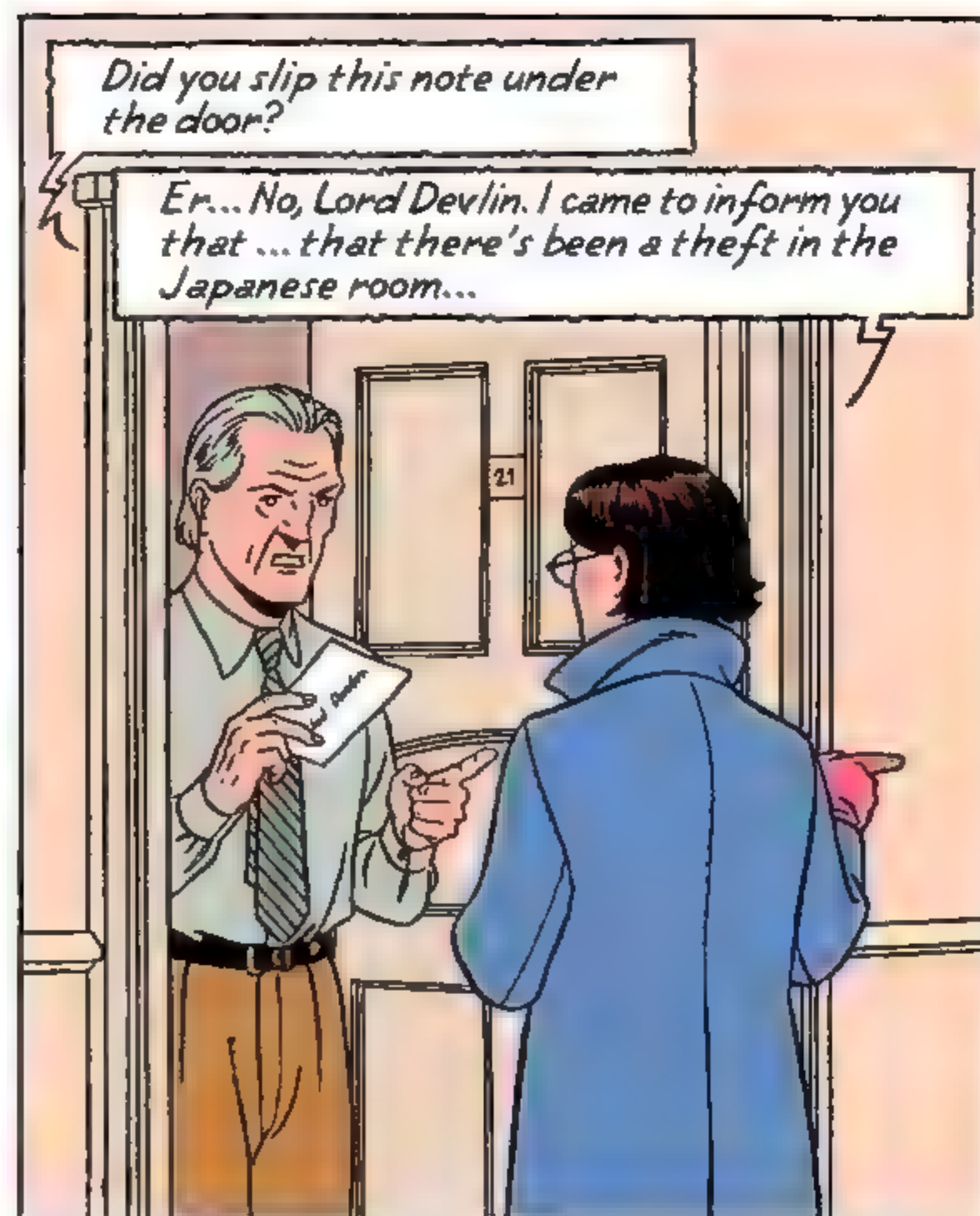
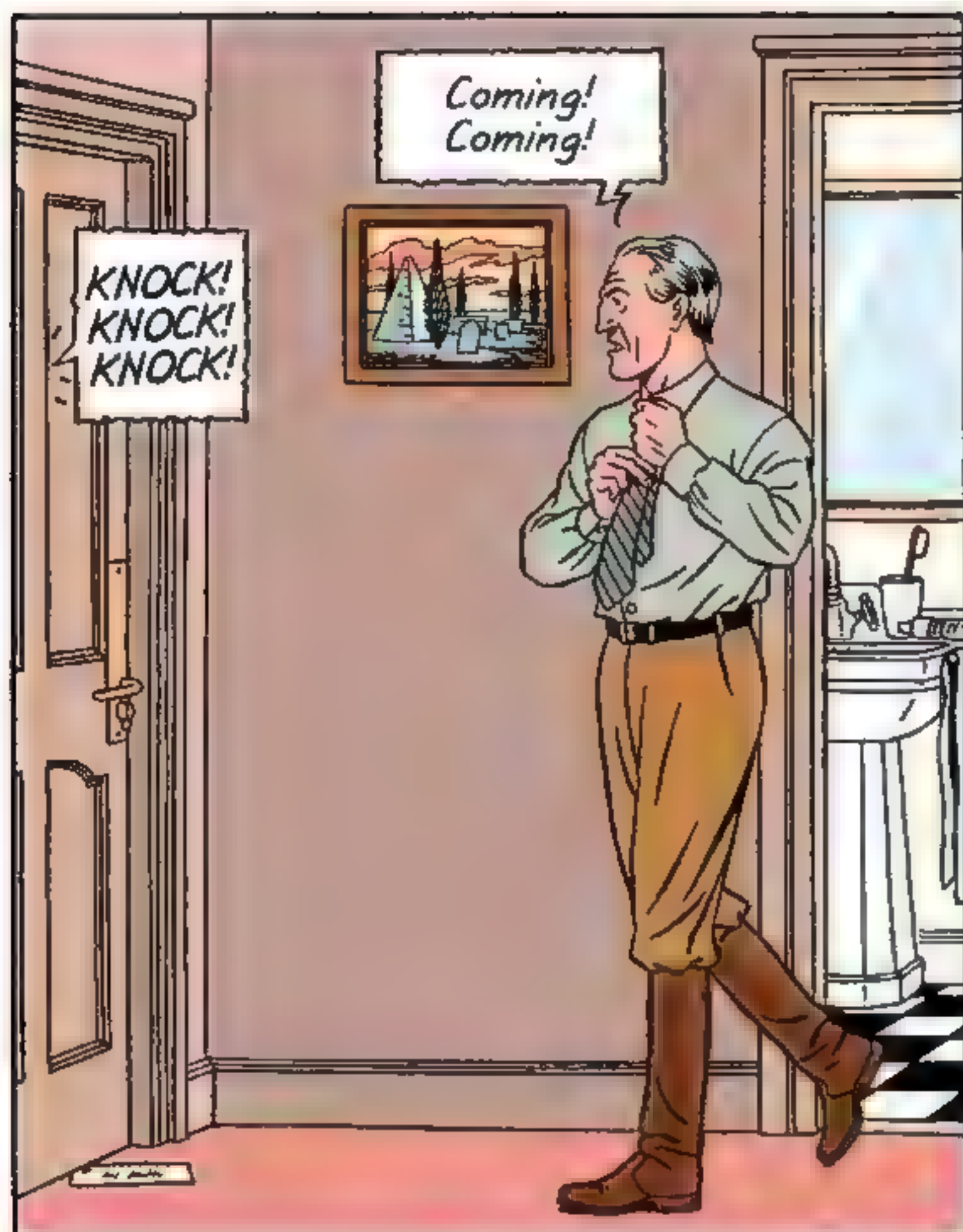
And you're quite good at it, it seems! Well, it only remains for me to thank you for your cooperation and wish you continued success in your studies and competitions.

Er... Thank you, sir.



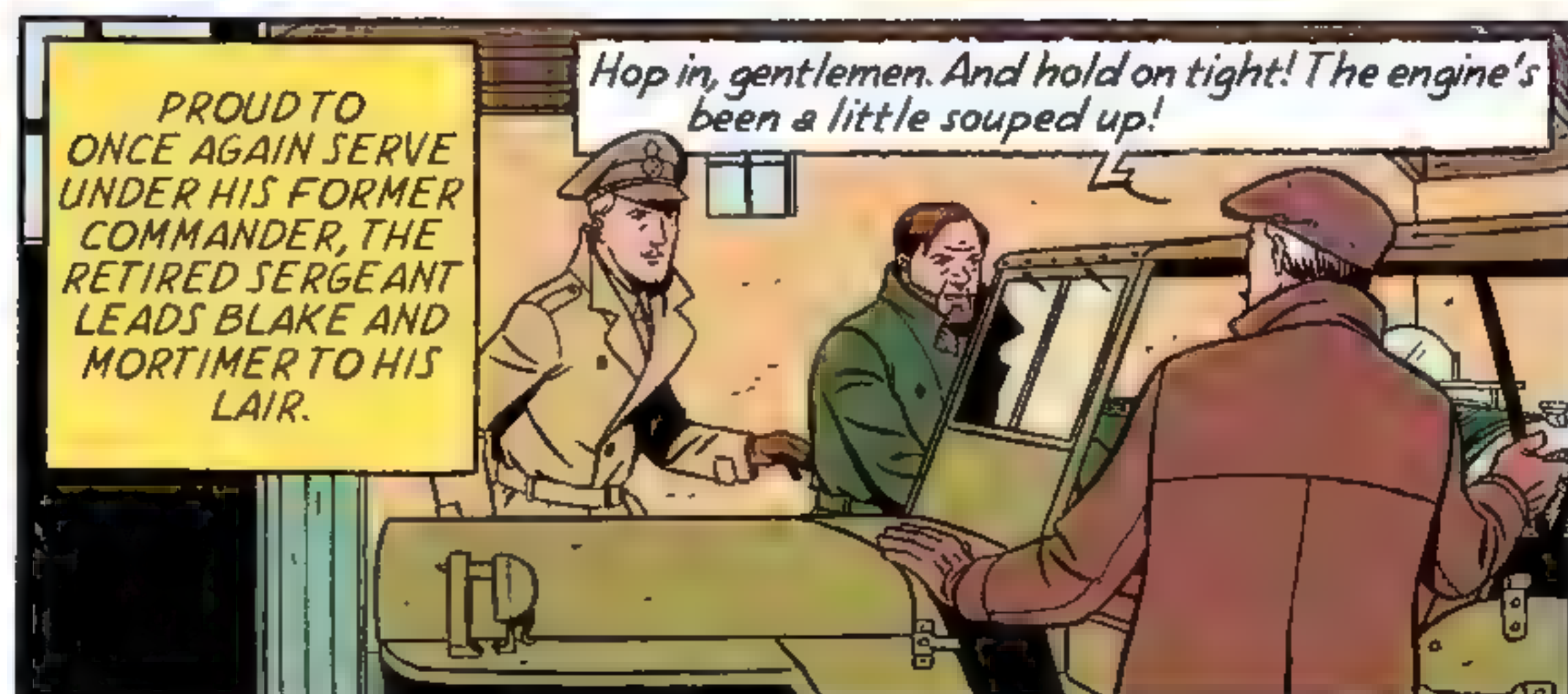
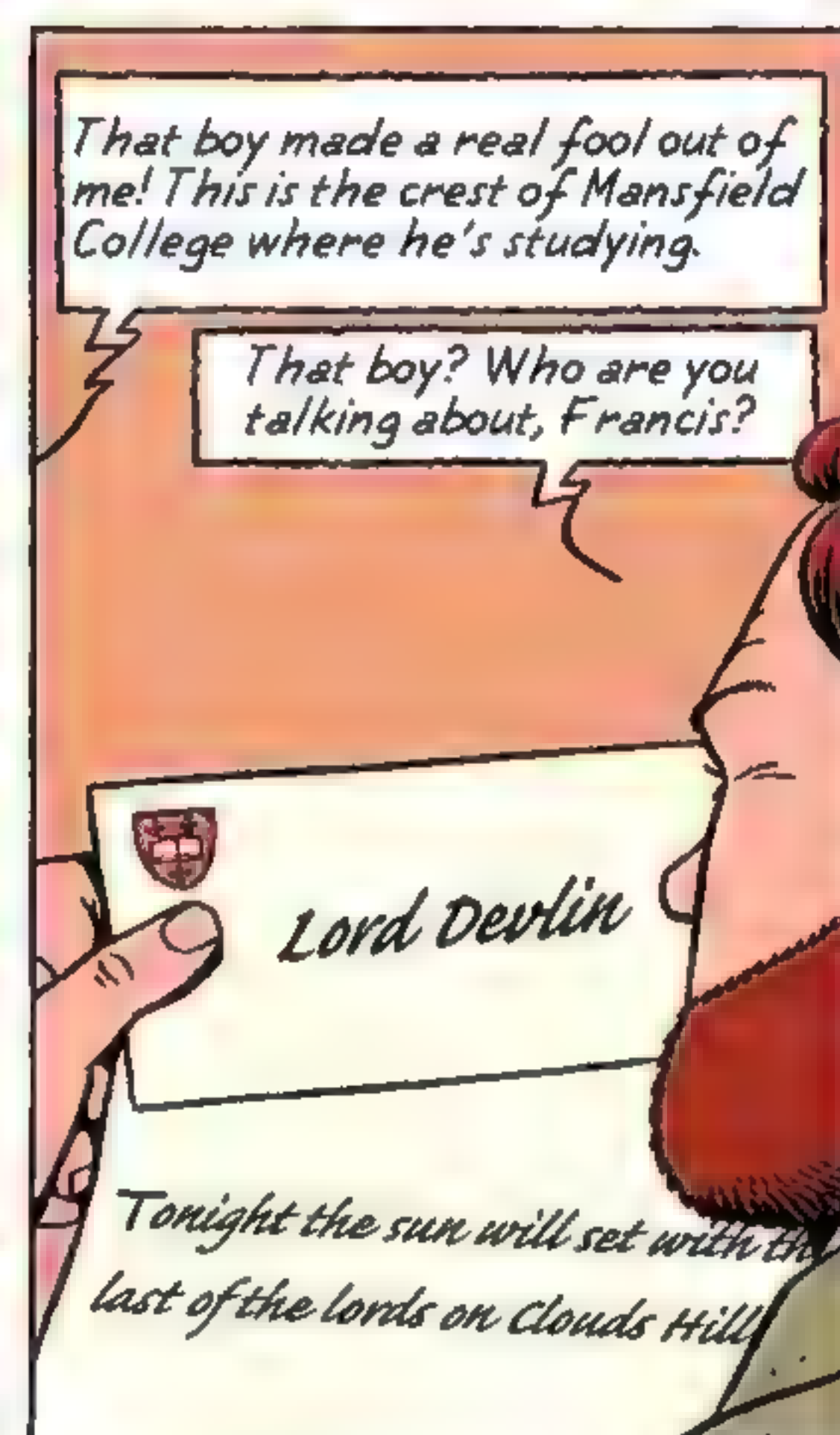
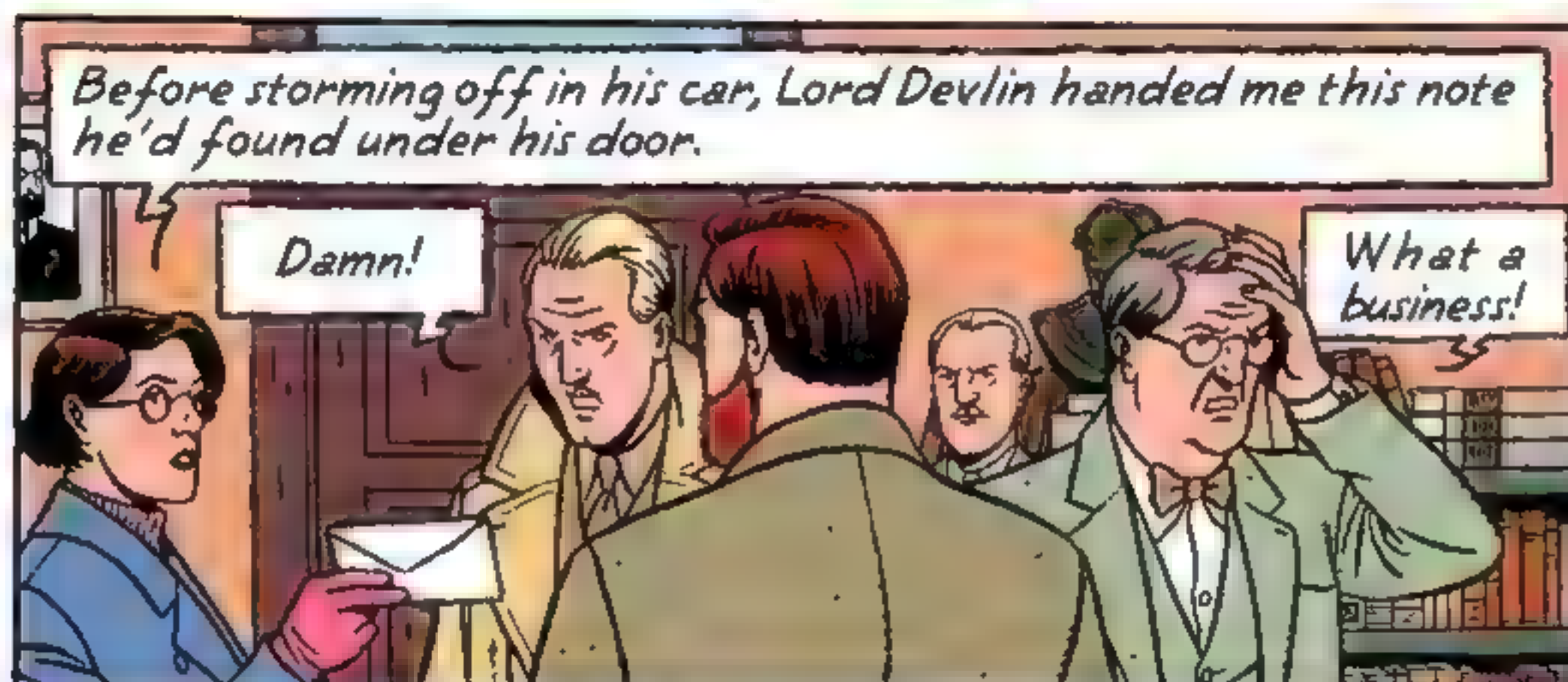
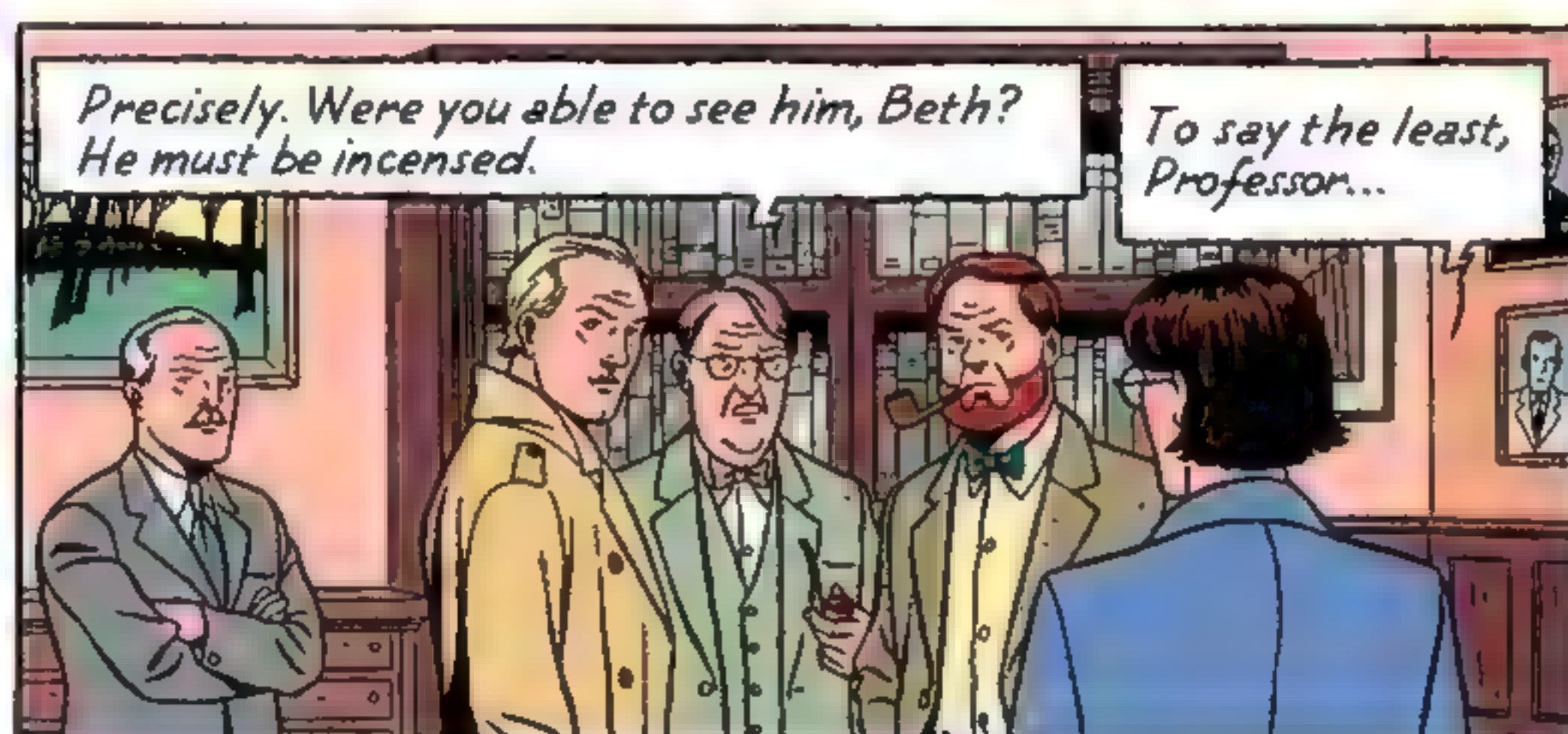
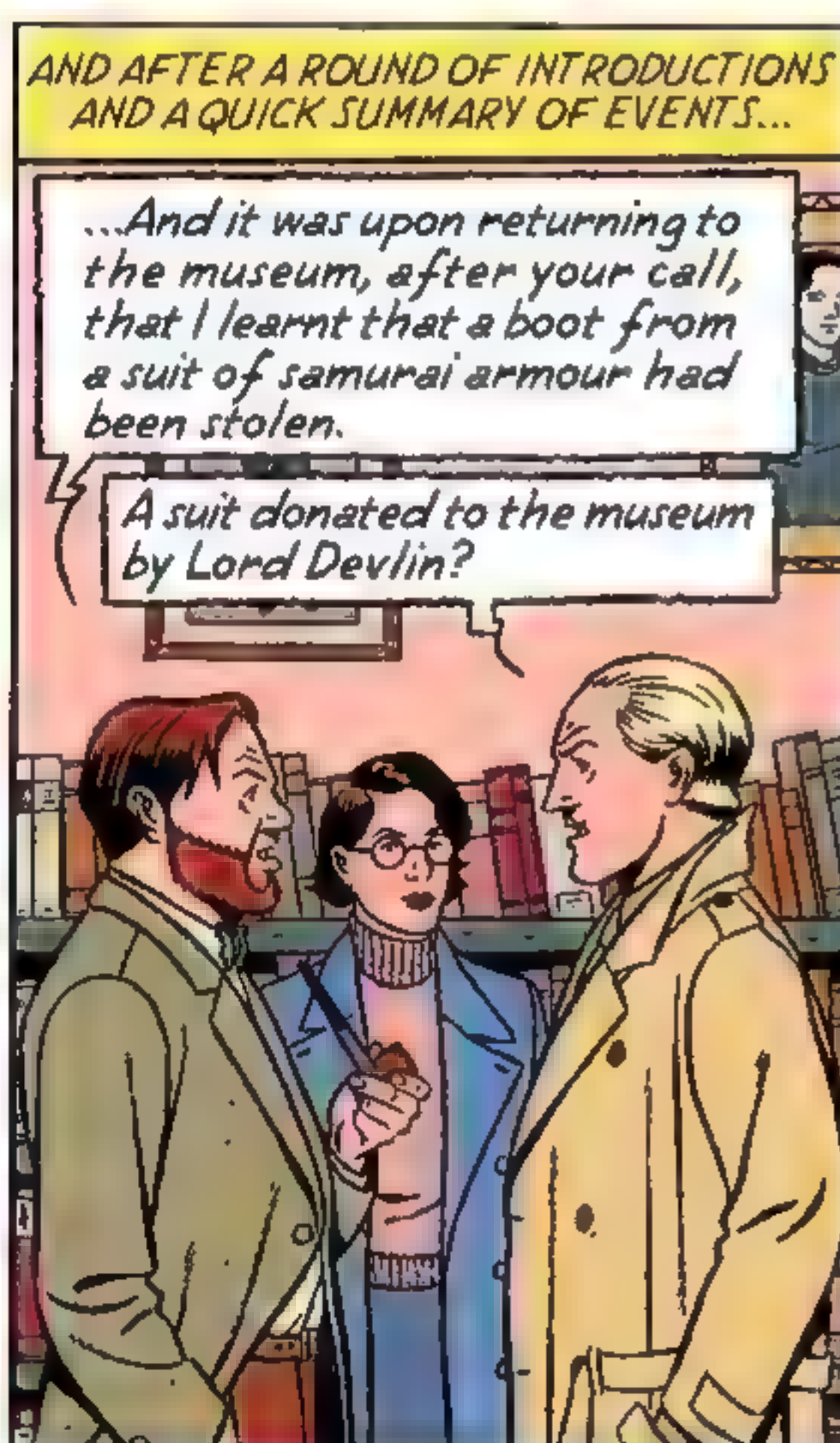
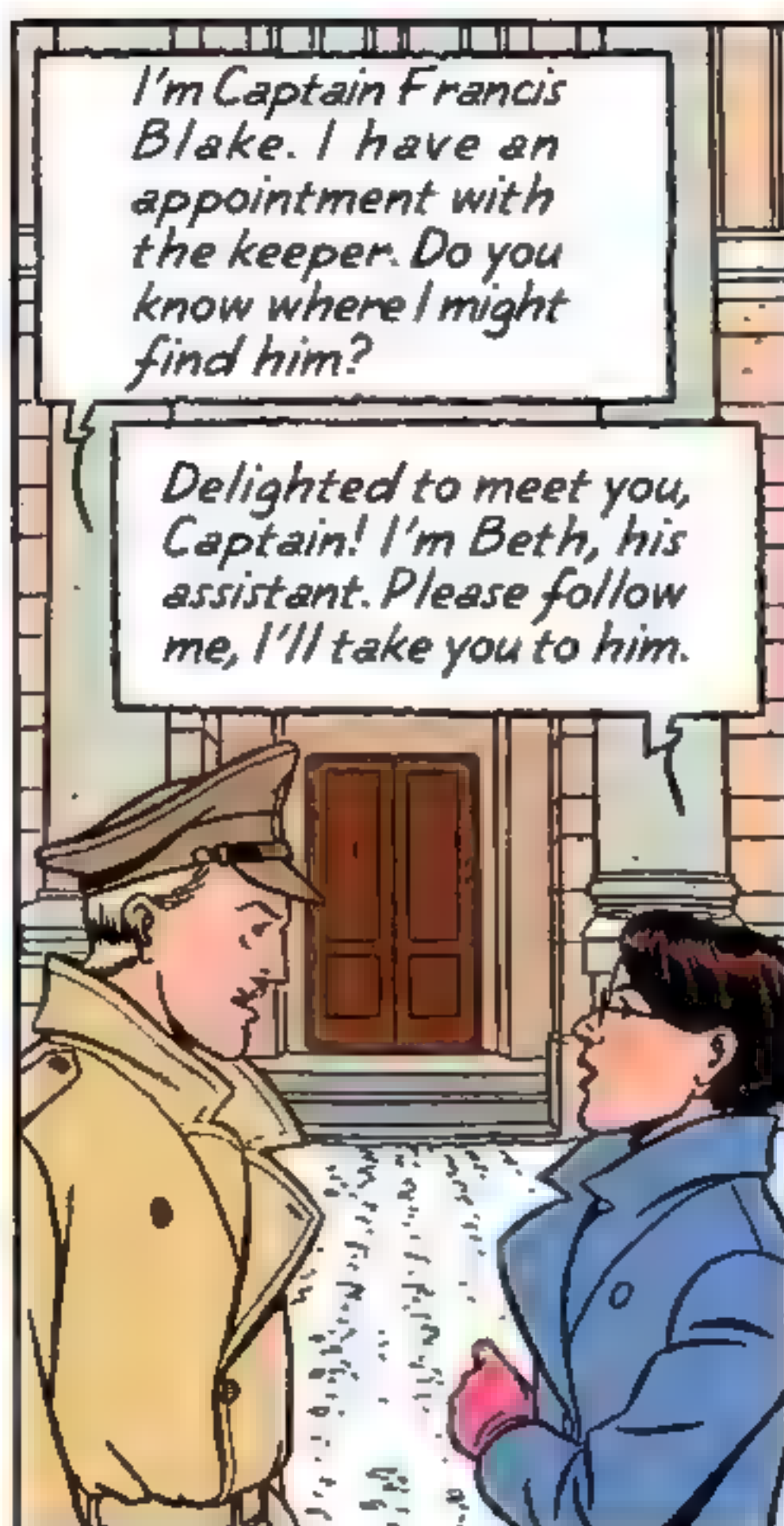
A FEW HUNDRED YARDS AWAY, AT THE MACDONALD RANDOLPH...

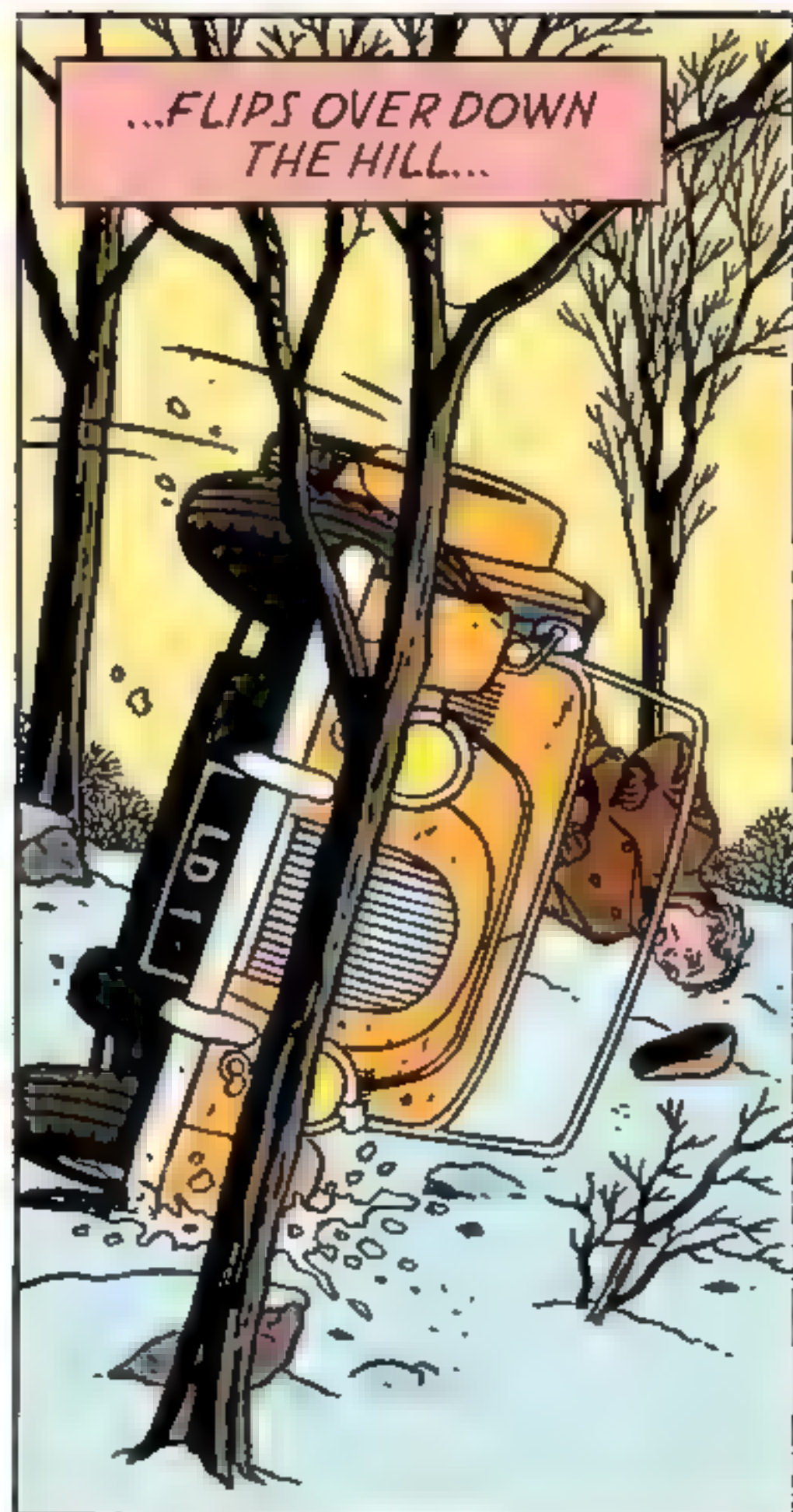
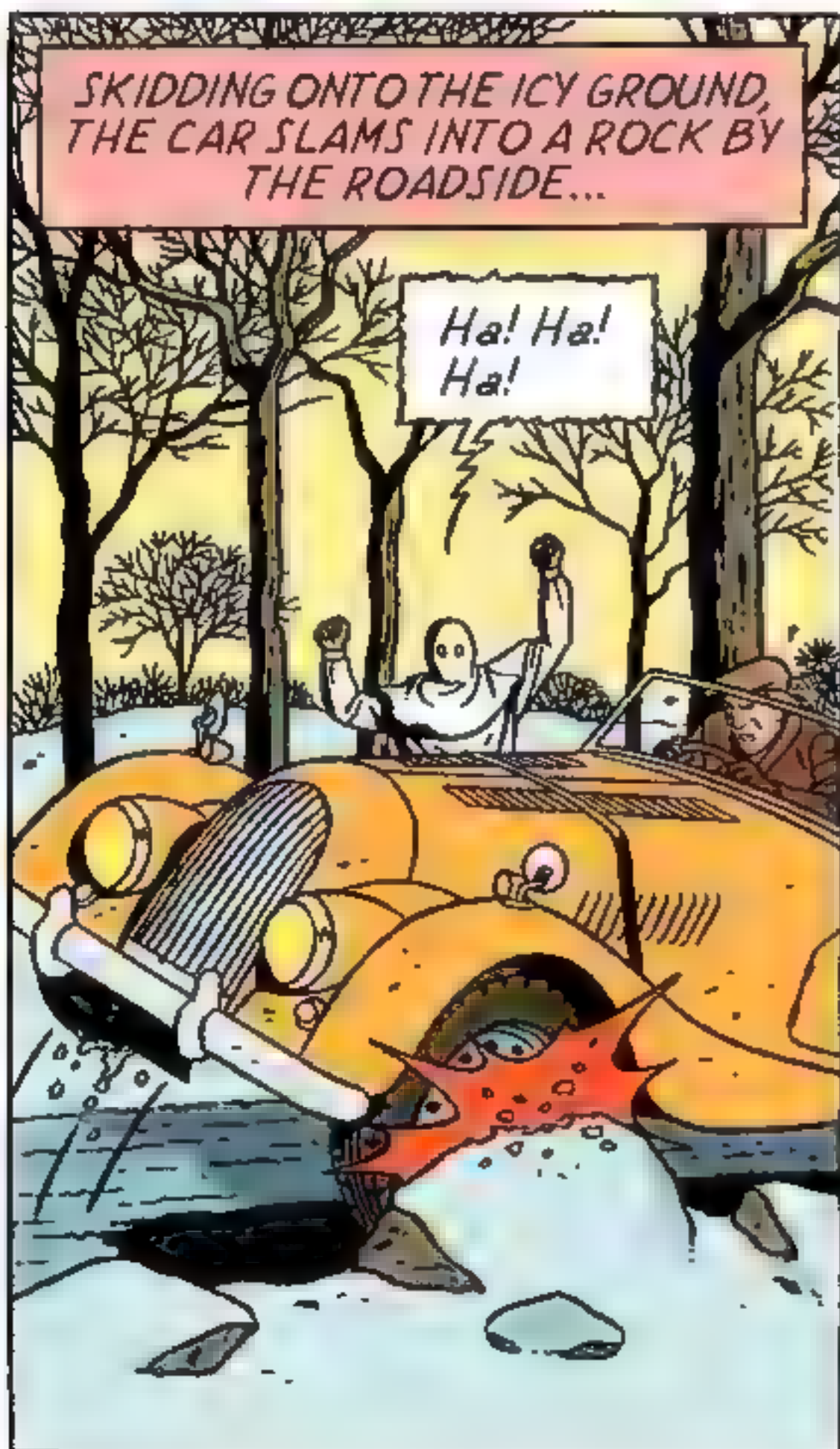
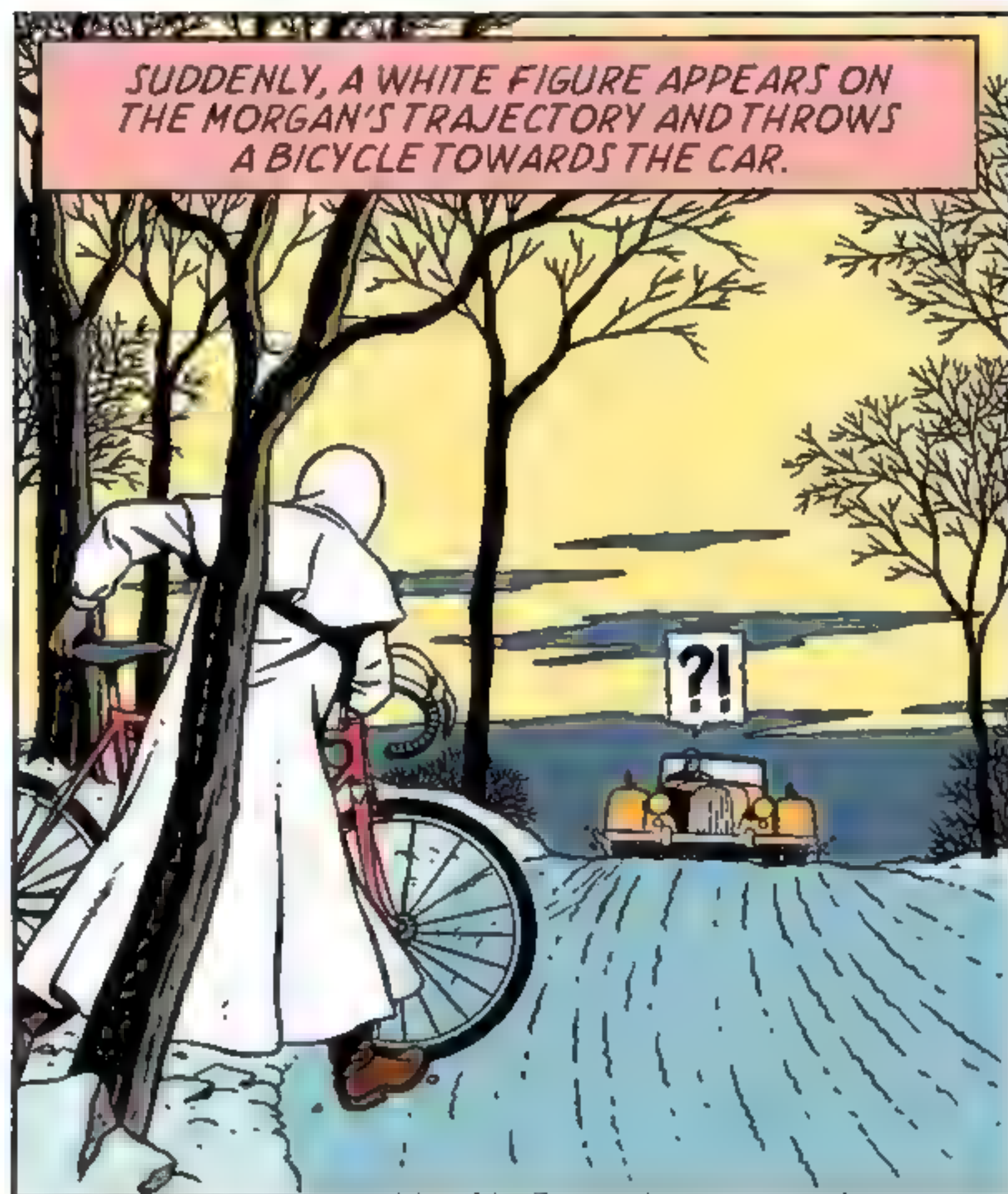
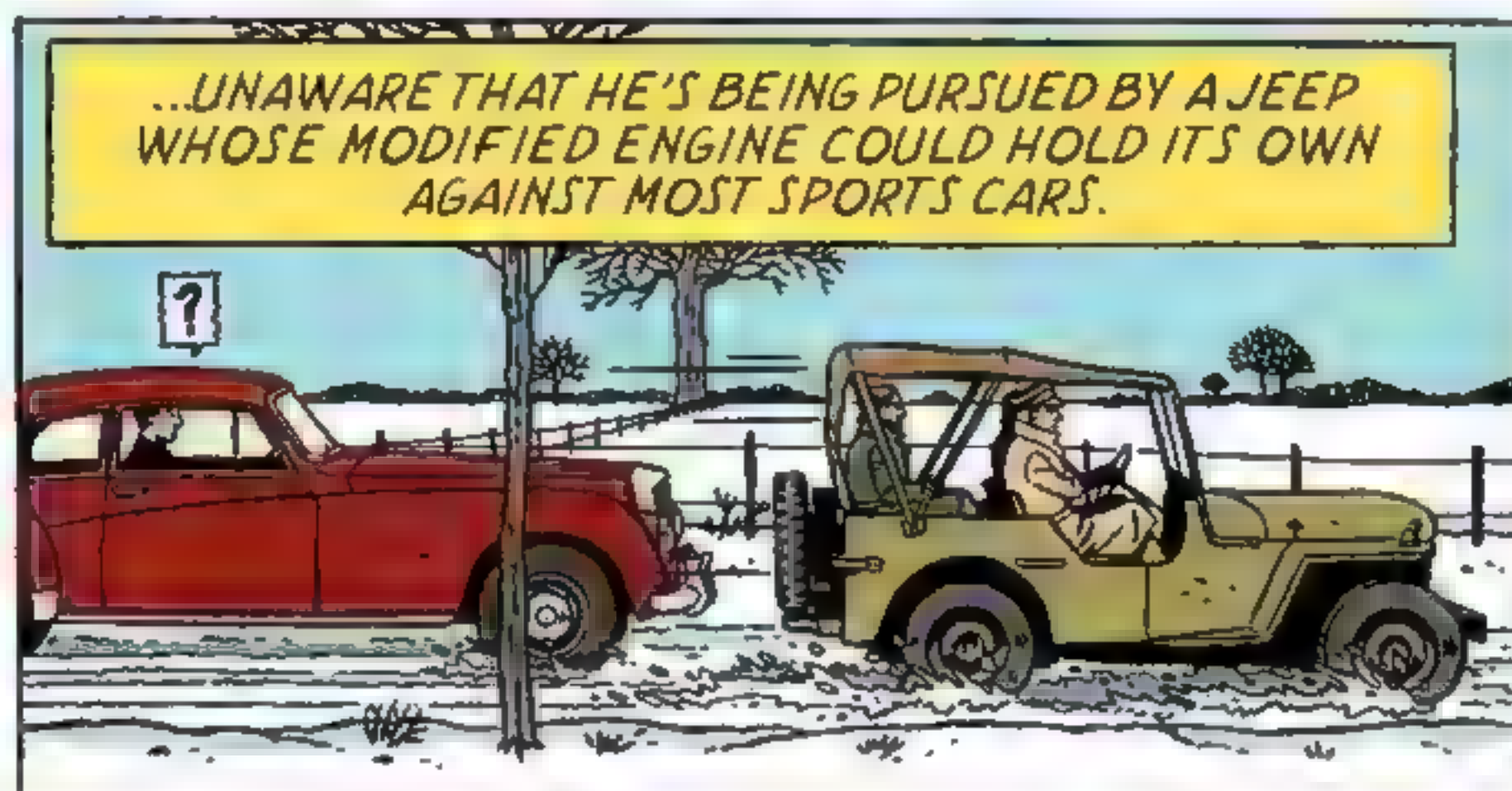
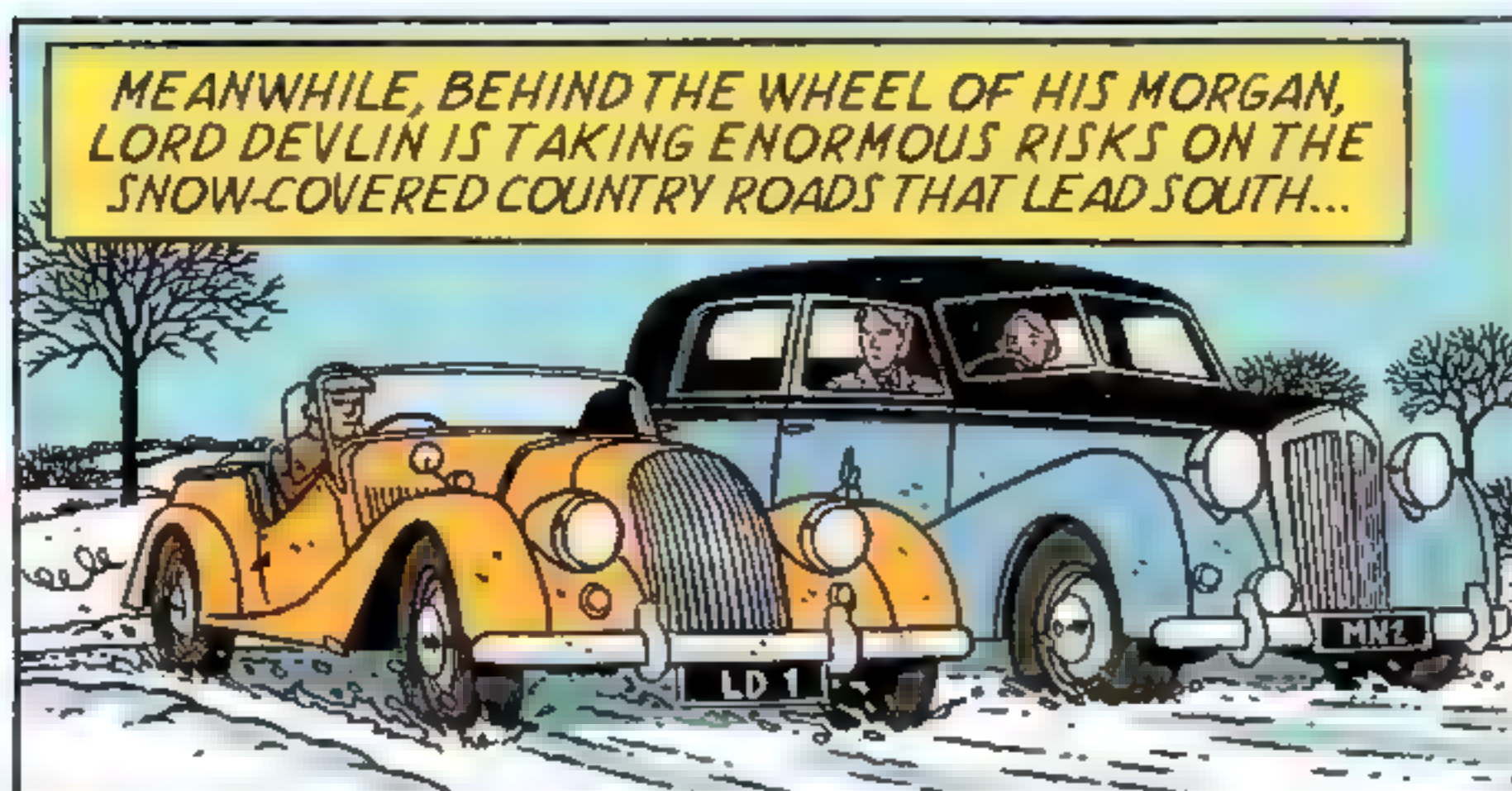


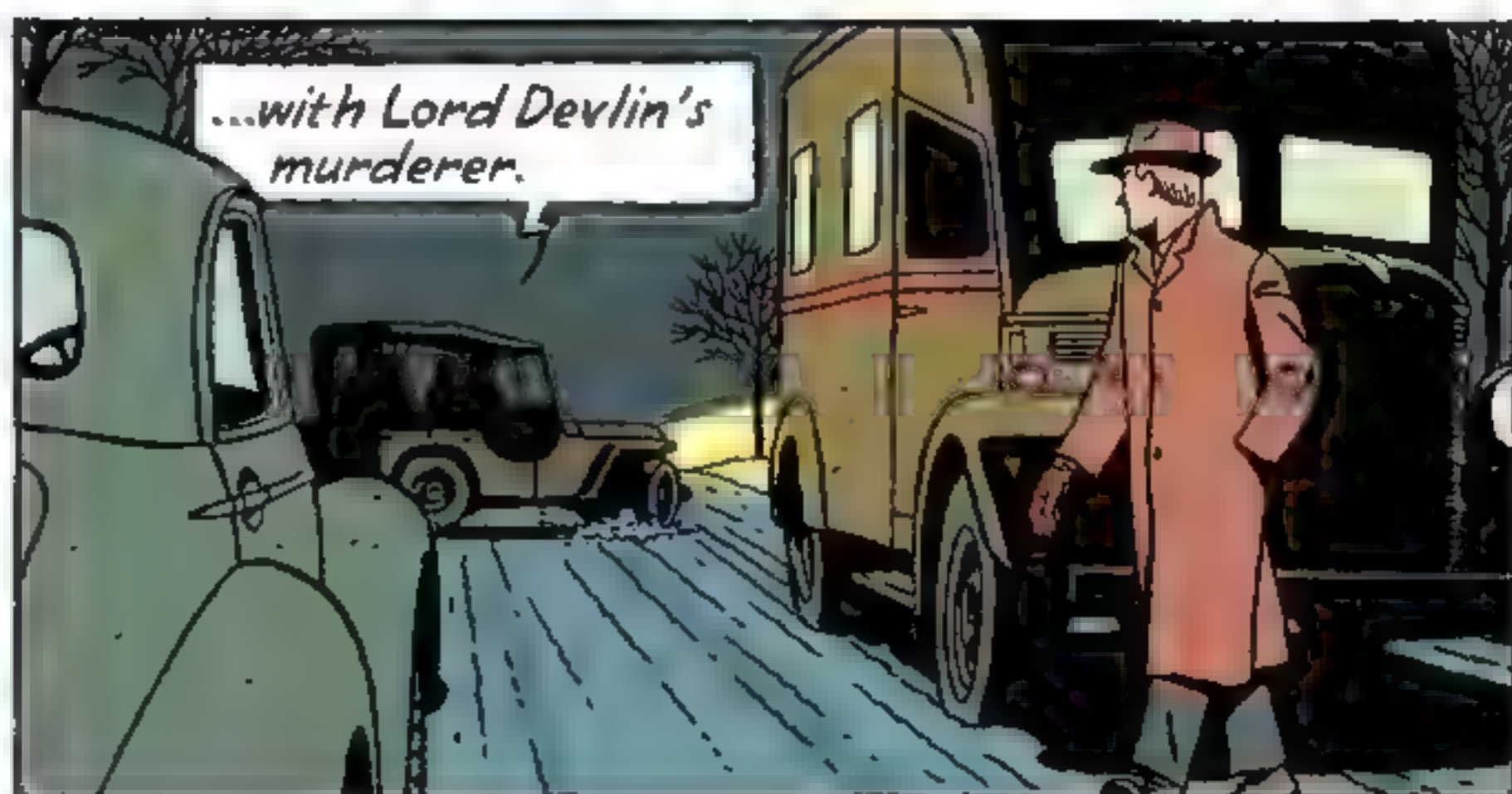
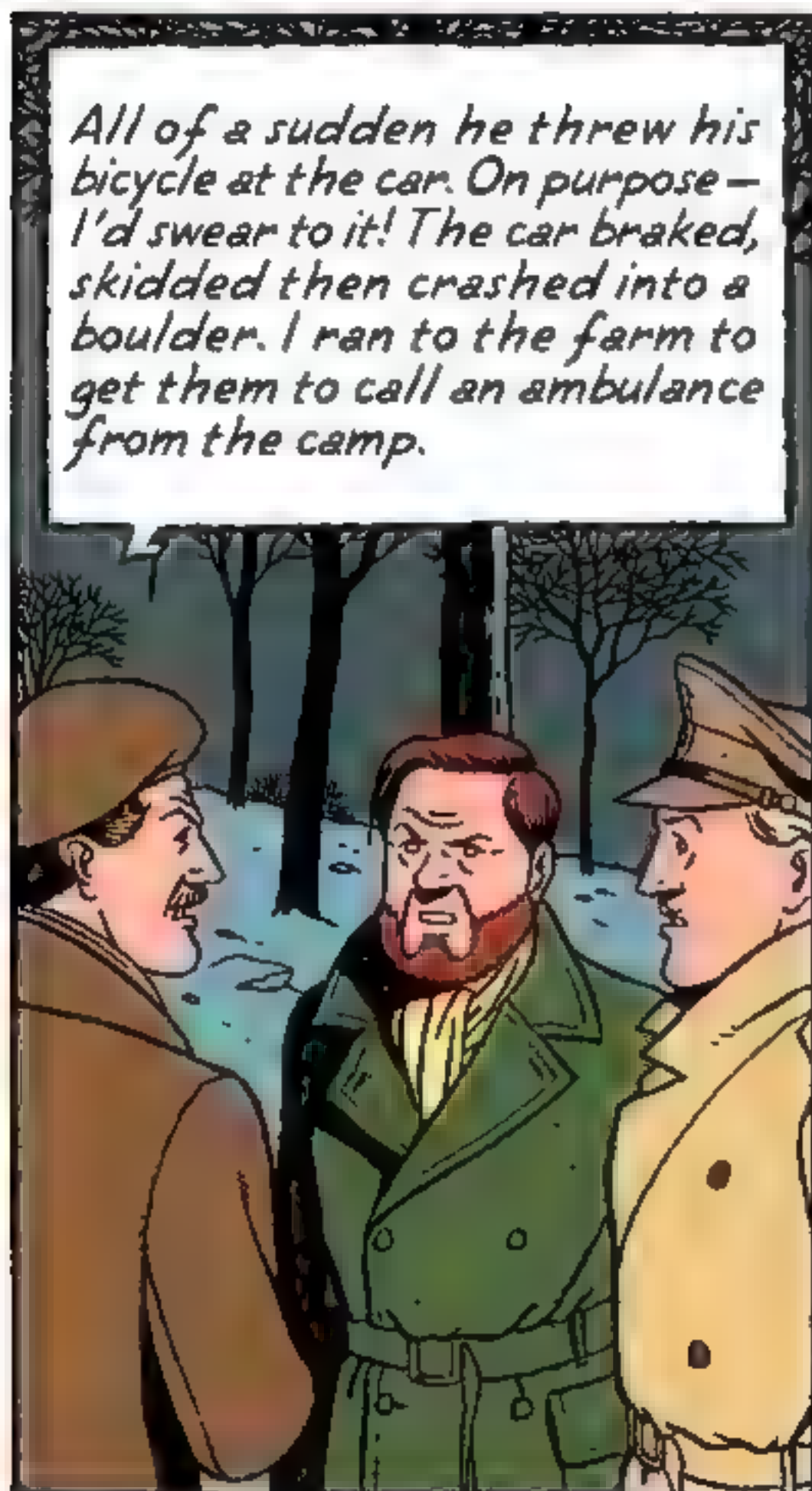
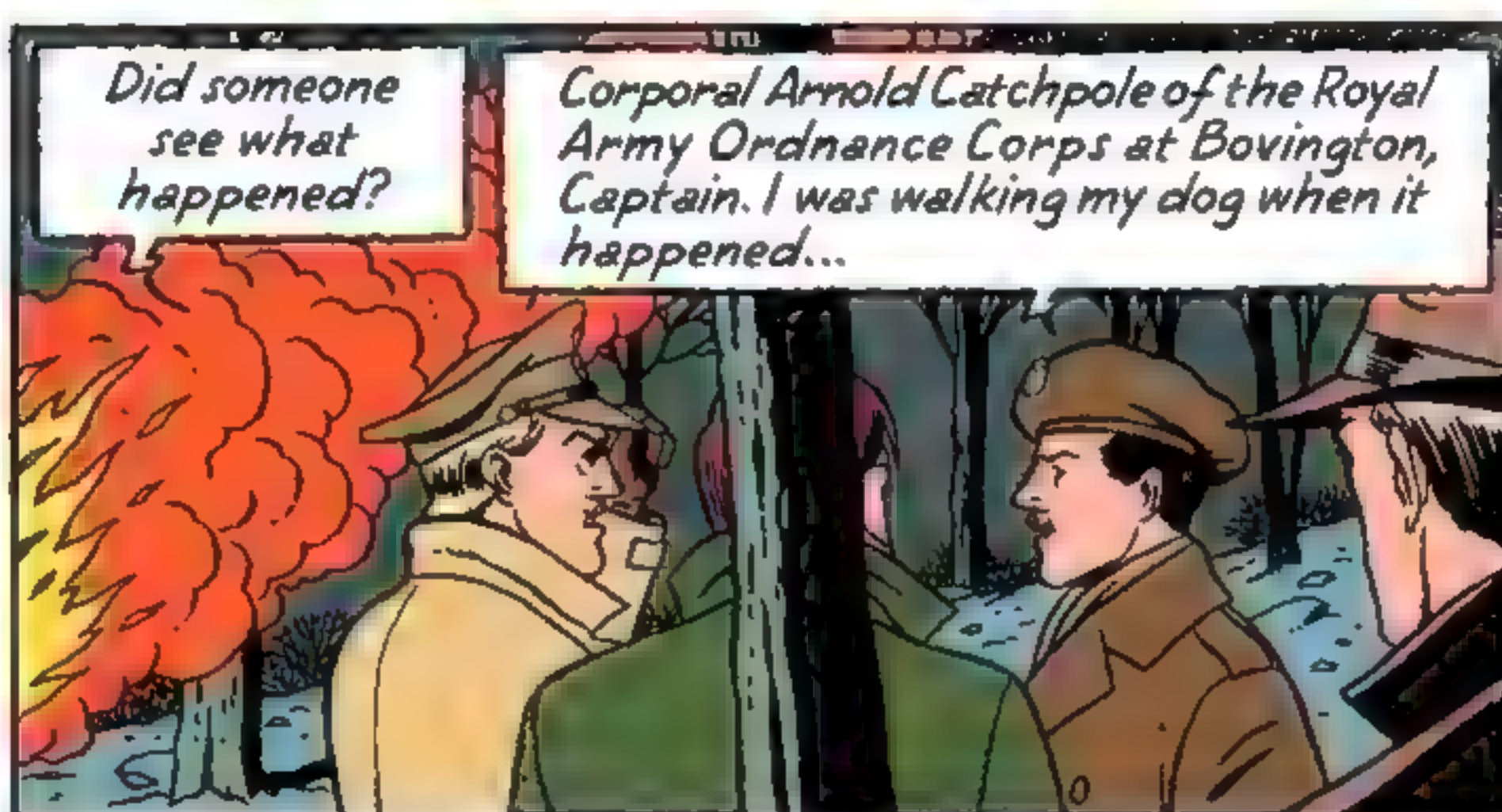
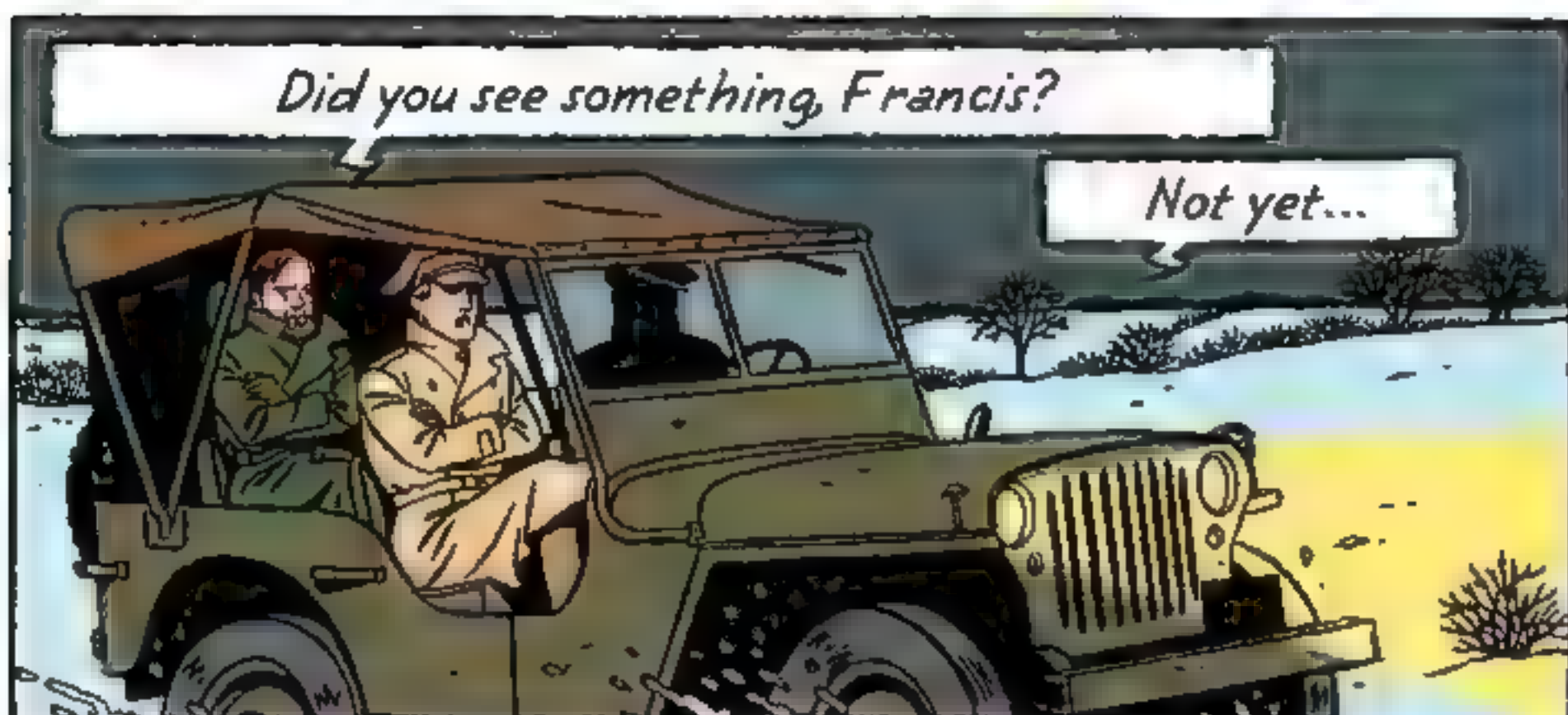
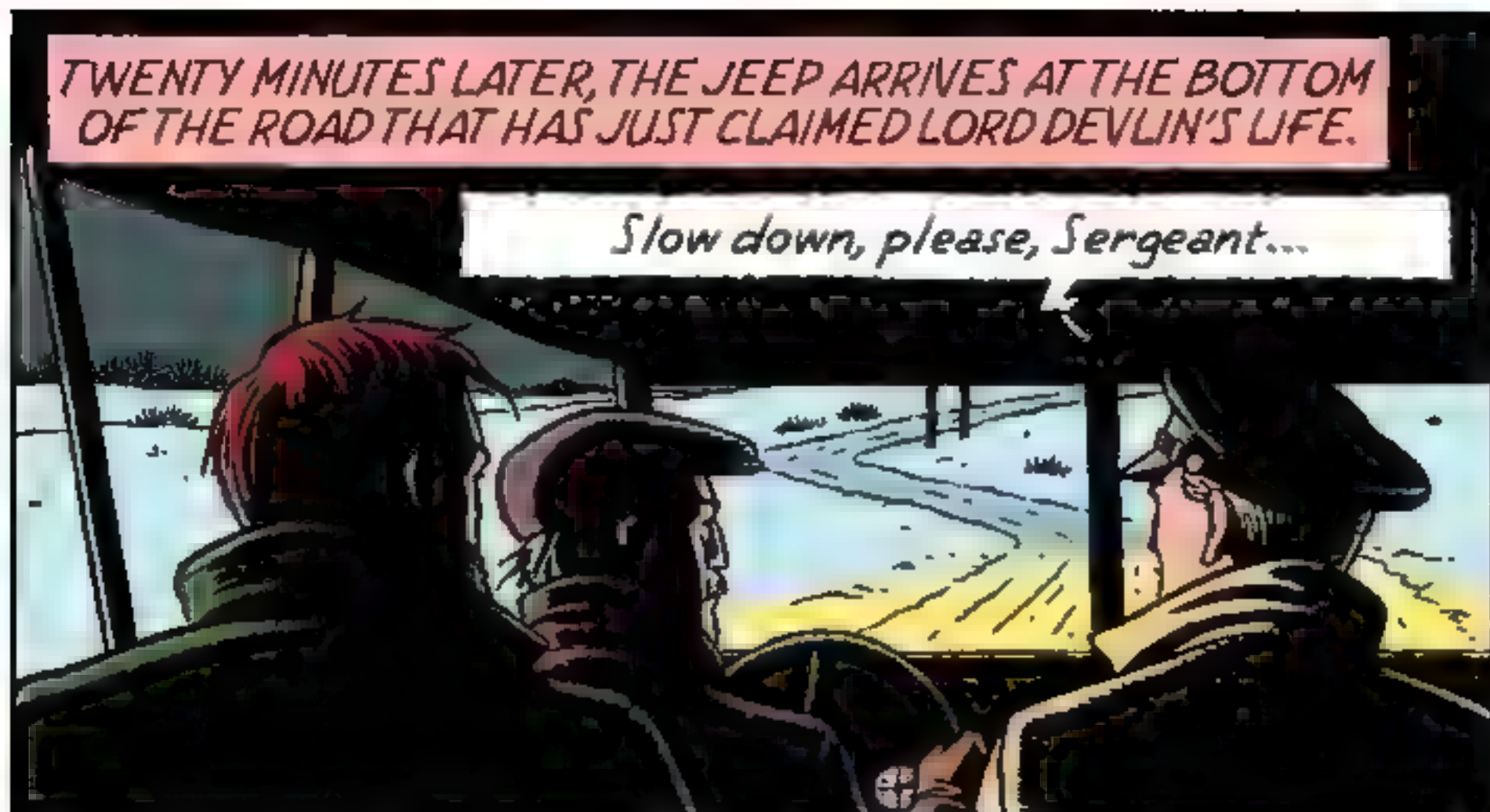




SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, THE KEEPER'S ASSISTANT ARRIVES AT THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM - AT THE SAME TIME AS BLAKE.











A FEW MINUTES LATER, THE TWO FRIENDS ARE BACK AT THE MACDONALD RANDOLPH HOTEL.



Here you are at last! We were so worried! Mac told us about Lord Devlin's death.

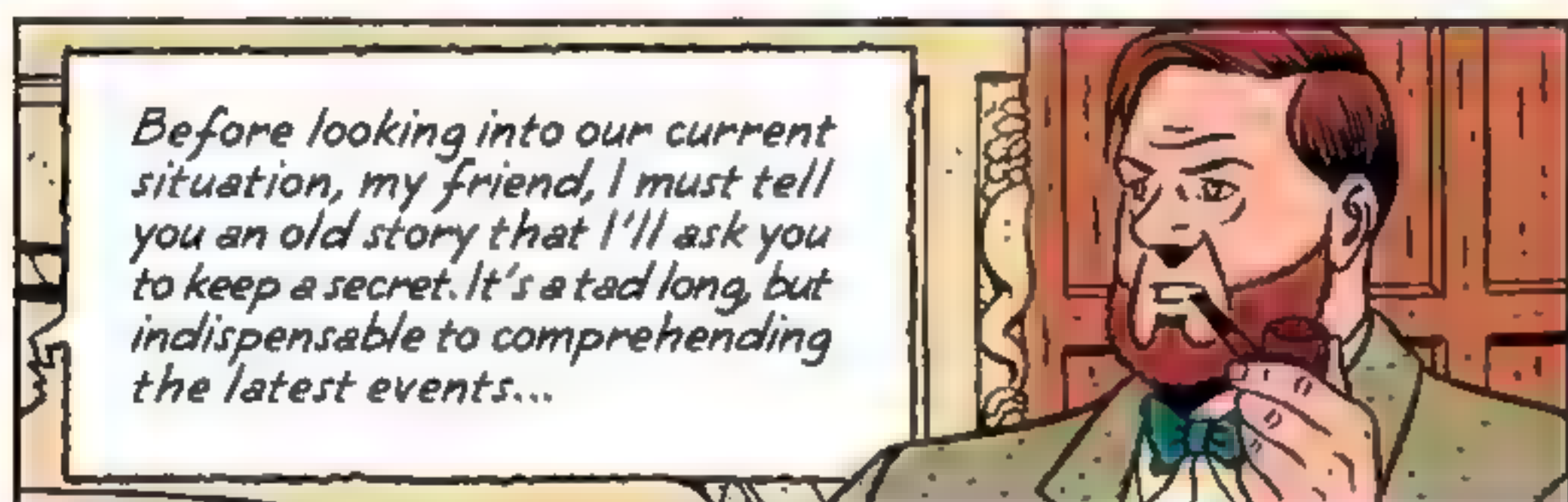


Won't that criminal ever stop?! What shall we do?

For the moment, we shall stay calm. Thank you for waiting for us, but you should go and get some rest now. Nothing more will happen tonight.



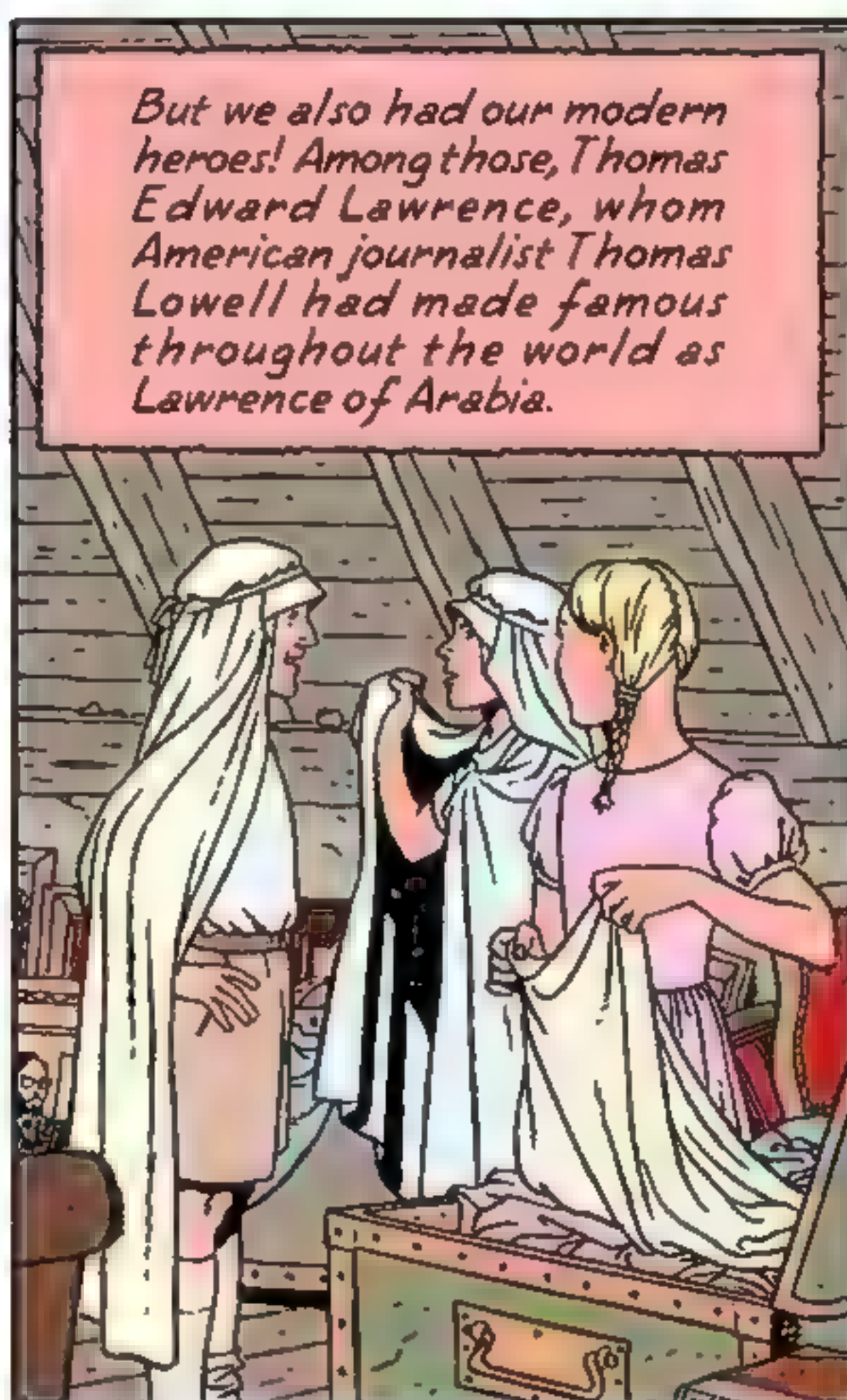
WITH THEIR FRIENDS GONE, BLAKE AND PROFESSOR MORTIMER TAKE COMFORTABLE SEATS IN THE BAR, READY TO HAVE ... A LONG DISCUSSION.



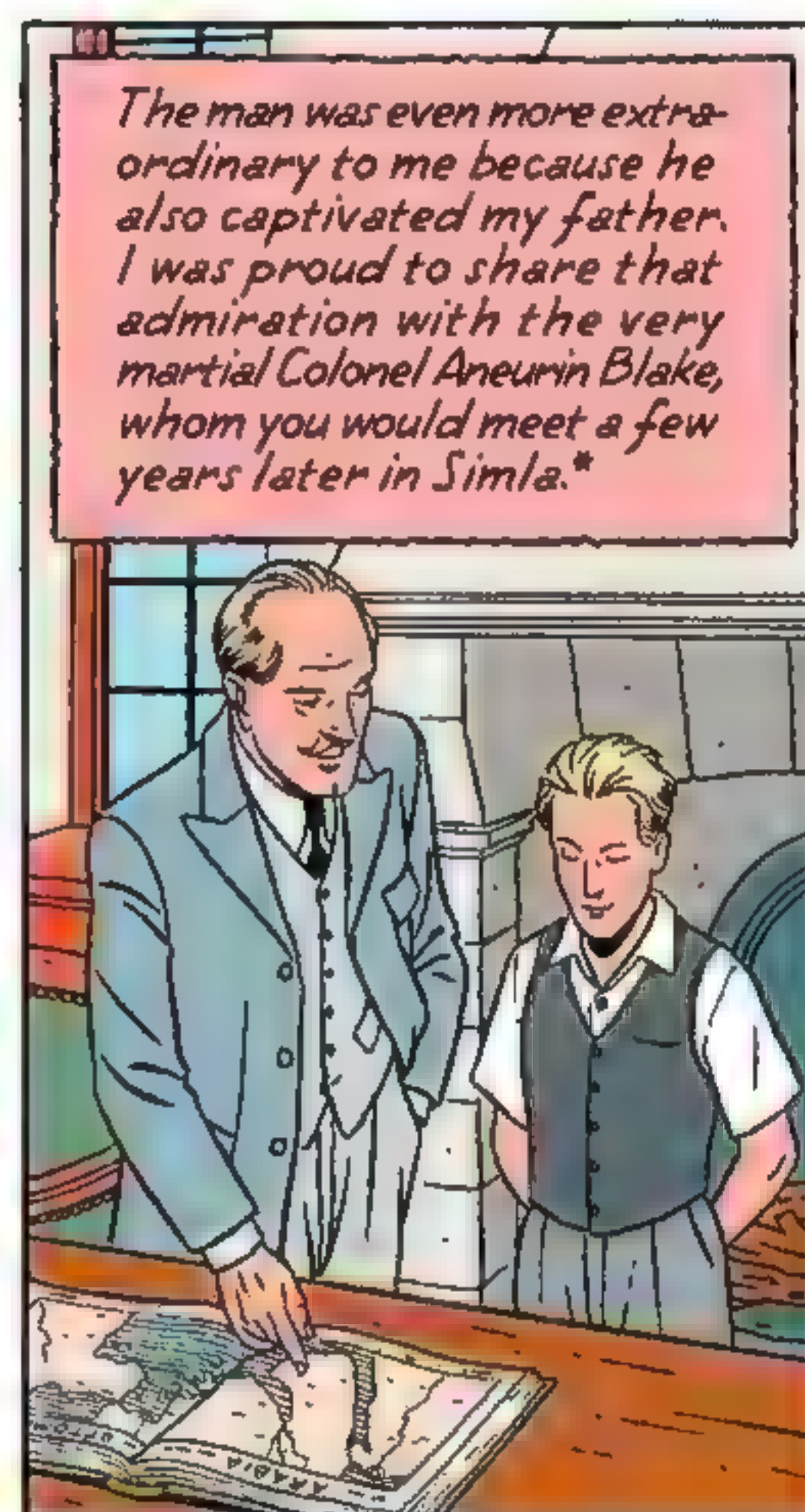
Before looking into our current situation, my friend, I must tell you an old story that I'll ask you to keep a secret. It's a tad long, but indispensable to comprehending the latest events...



It begins when I was around eight or nine. My cousins and I were fascinated by medieval feats of arms, and in the family estate of Rowan House, we dreamt of nothing but glorious, epic deeds.



But we also had our modern heroes! Among those, Thomas Edward Lawrence, whom American journalist Thomas Lowell had made famous throughout the world as Lawrence of Arabia.



The man was even more extraordinary to me because he also captivated my father. I was proud to share that admiration with the very martial Colonel Aneurin Blake, whom you would meet a few years later in Simla.*



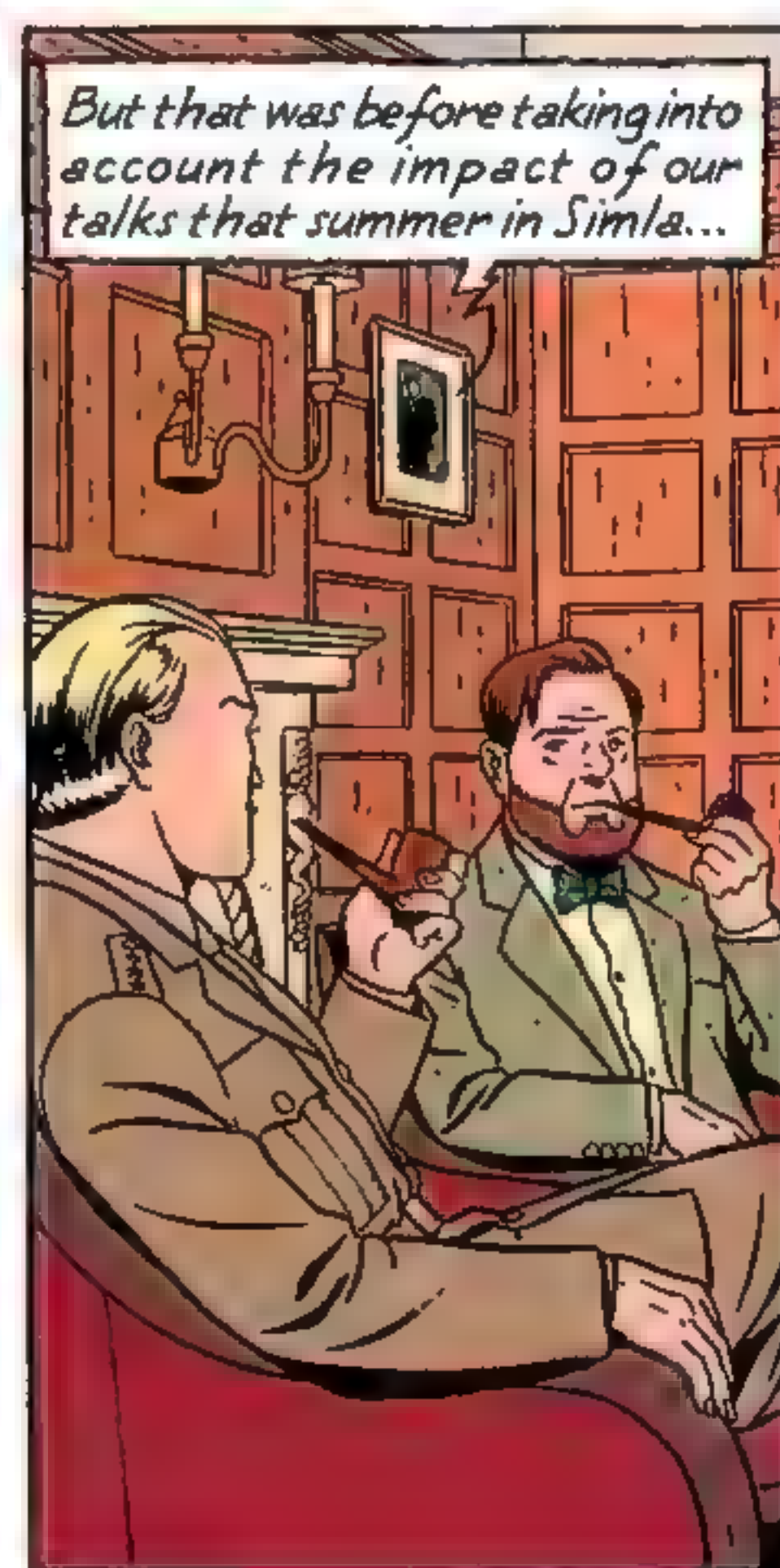
That passion followed me all the way to Eton College. My friends and I liked to submit to the iron discipline of our hero of the Great War...



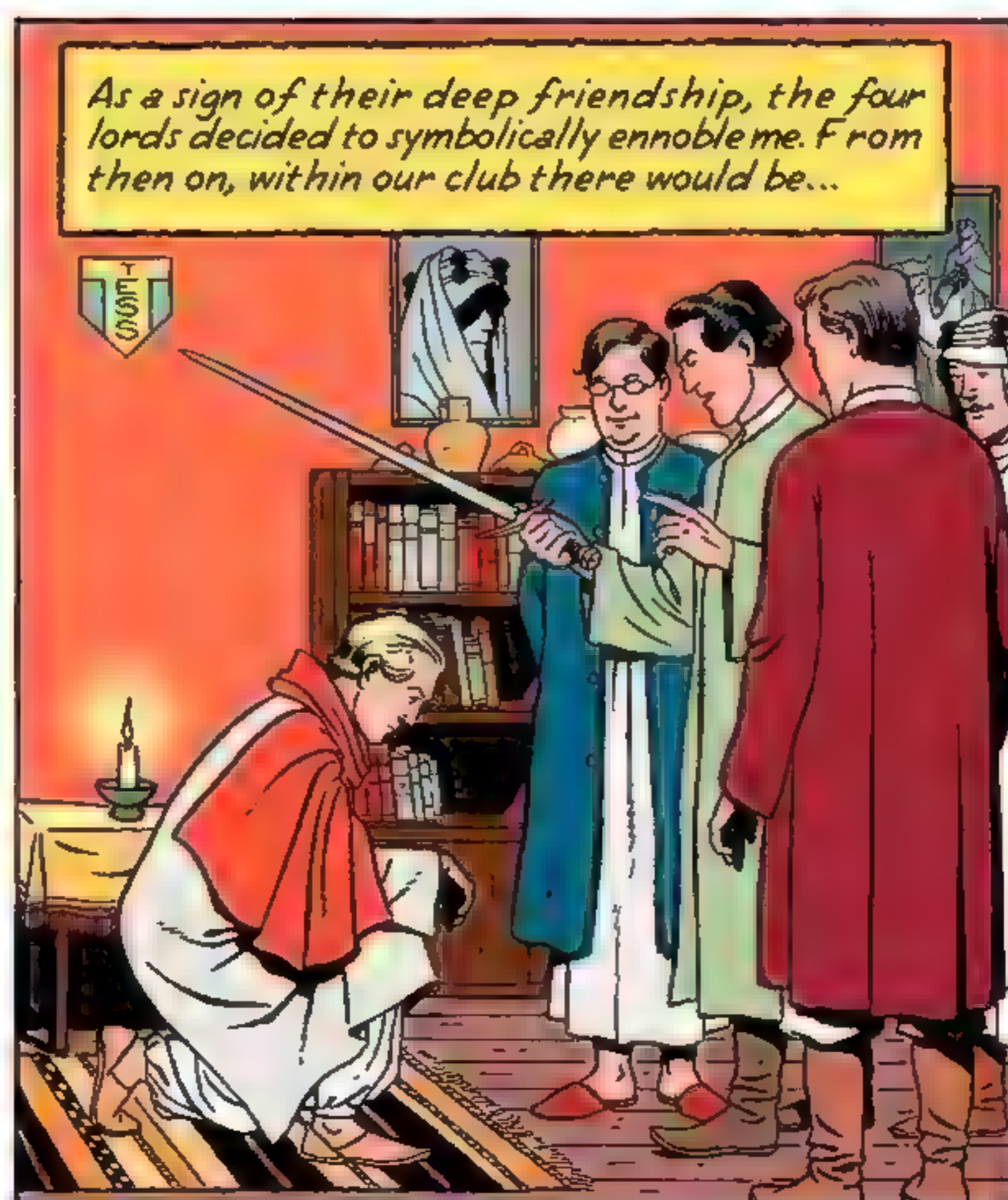
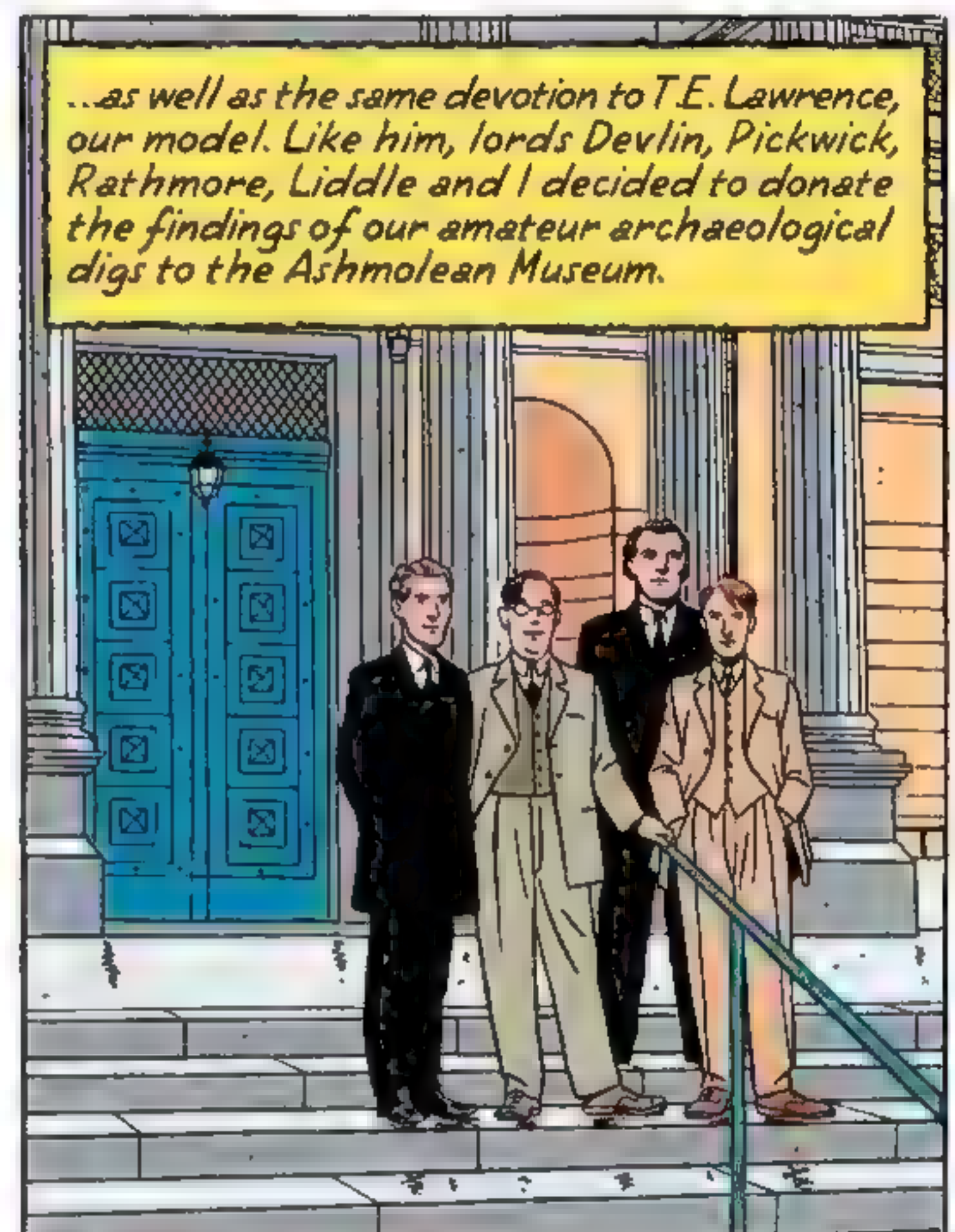
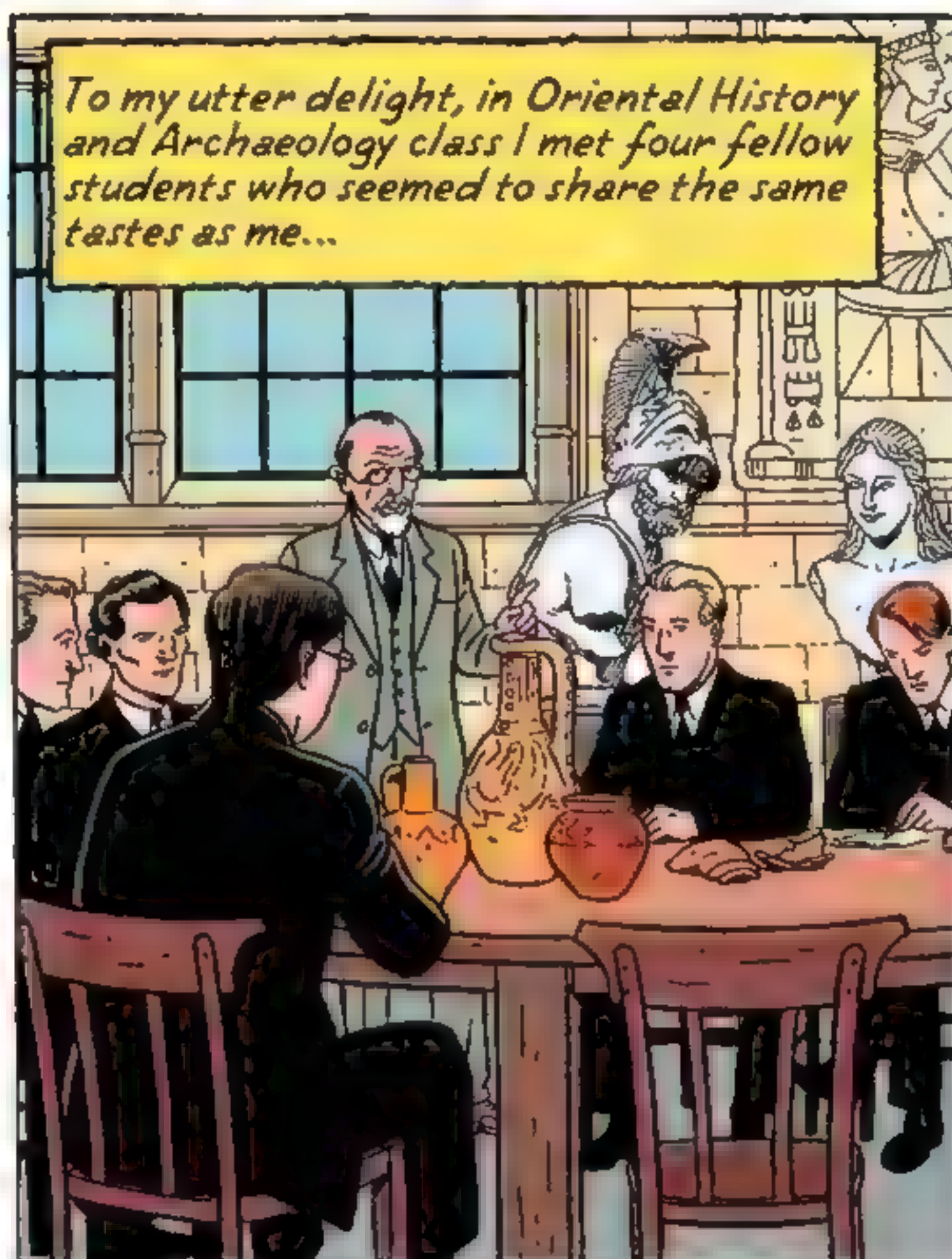
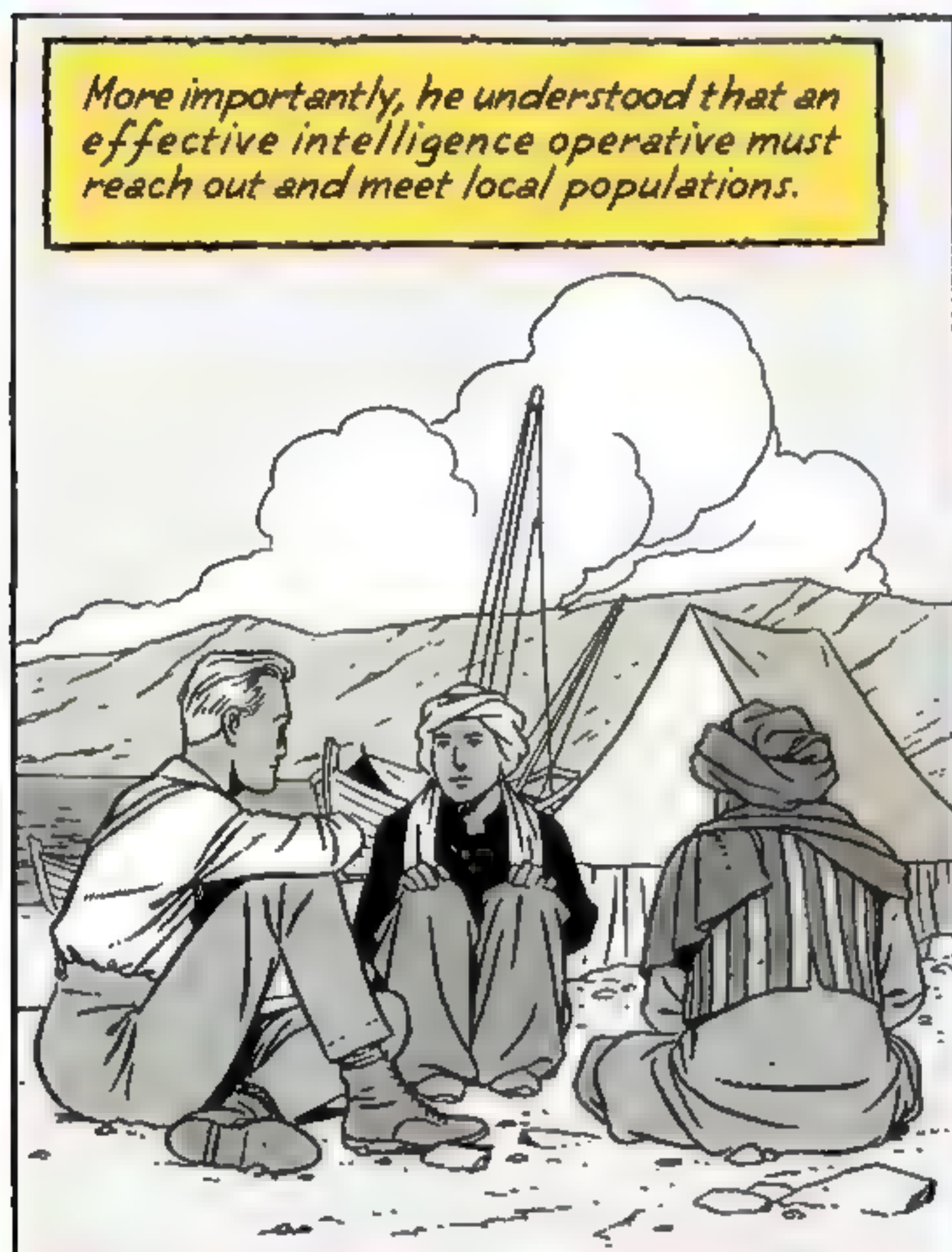
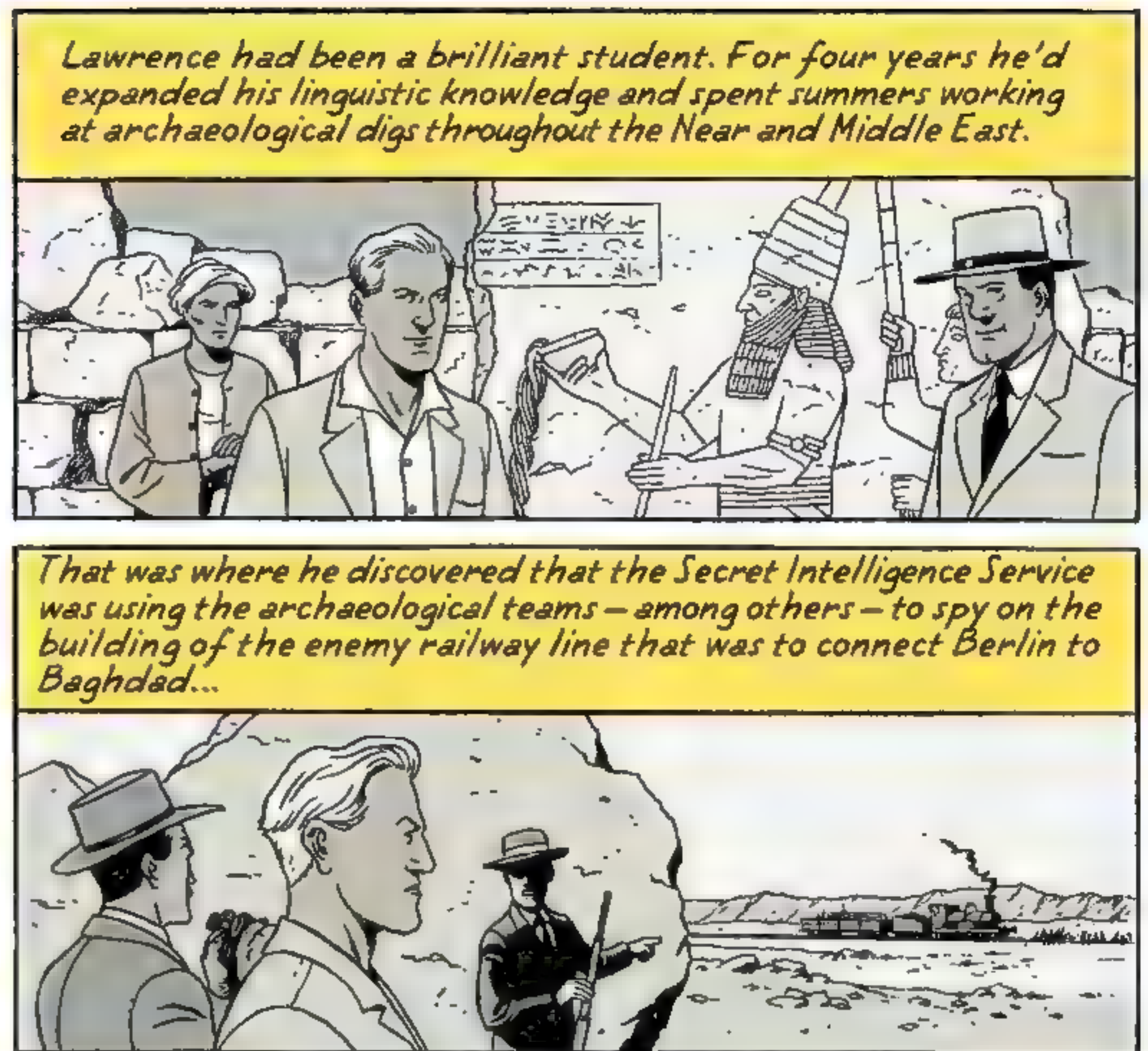
...who always strived for excellence, academic and athletic.



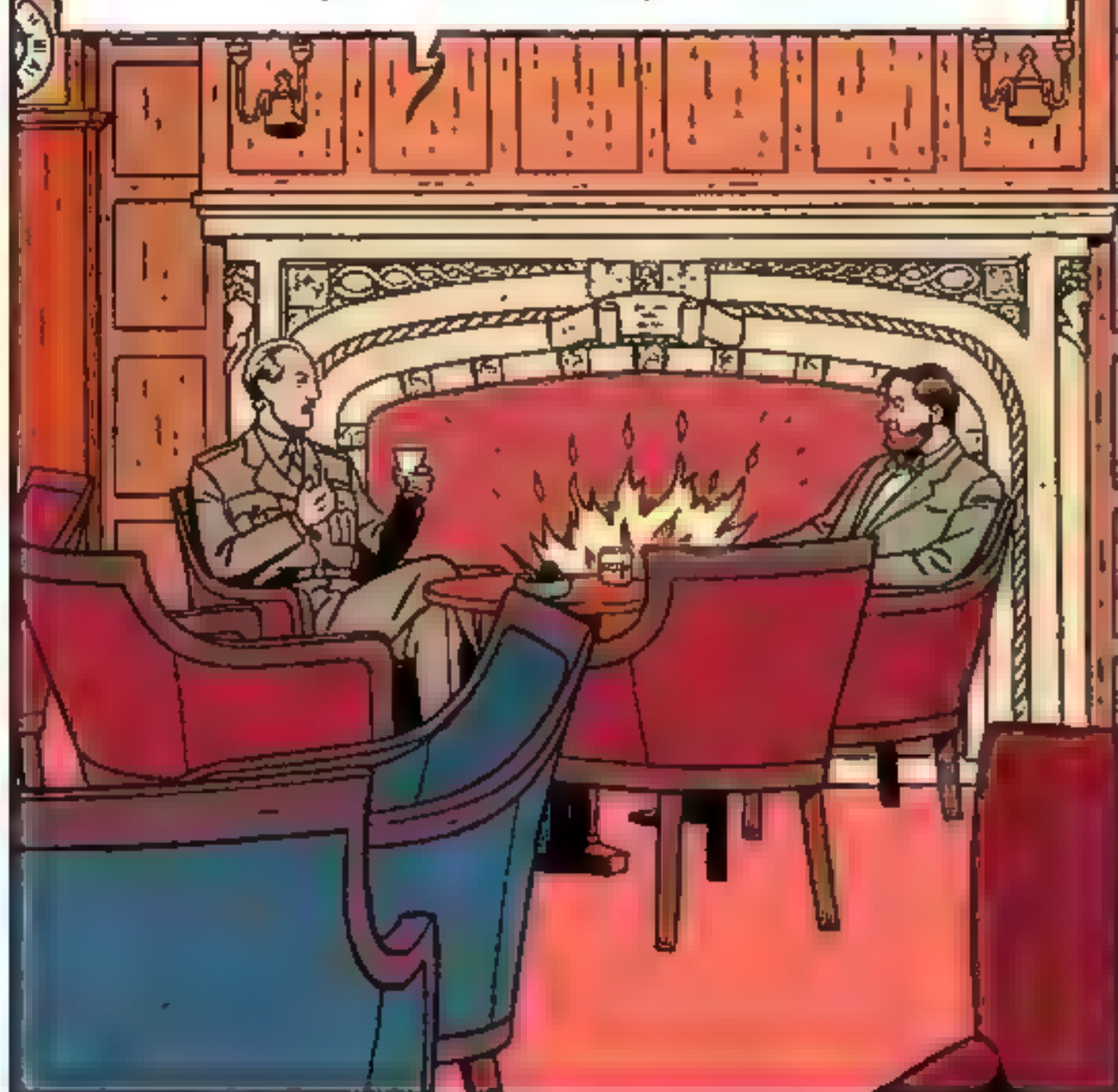
No sooner had I graduated than, encouraged by my father, I was ready to join the Royal Air Force staff college, as I'd explained to you in that train where we met in India.*



But that was before taking into account the impact of our talks that summer in Simla...



Indeed, old chap. I am the fifth 'lord'. But I wasn't cut out for my friends' somewhat idle existence. Perhaps it was for that reason that I unconsciously excluded myself from our only group picture? I felt different from them...



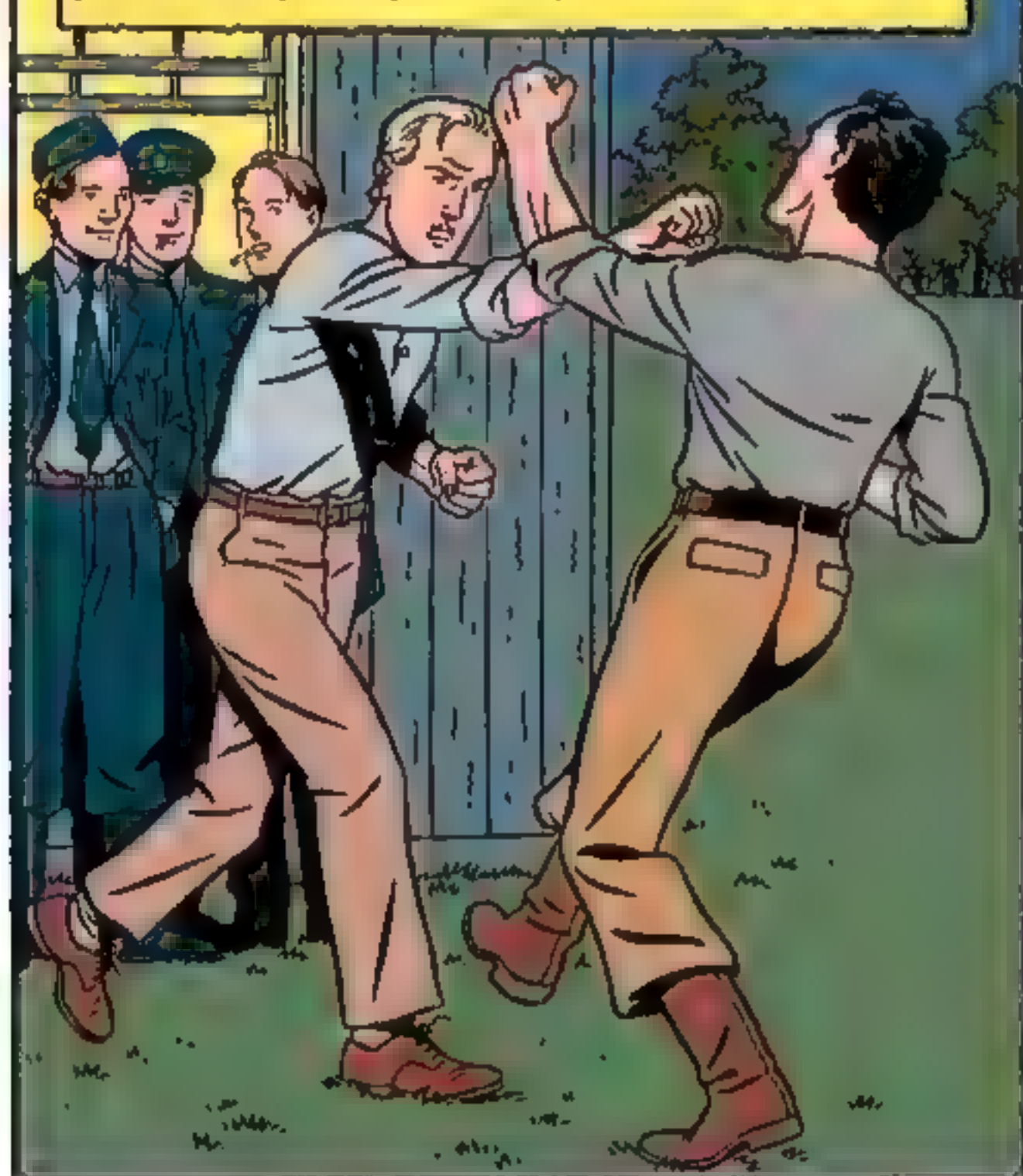
In the end, the siren's call of military life proved the strongest—as it had for Lawrence, in fact... I needed action! With my degrees under my belt, I said my goodbyes to my friends during a memorable soirée, which, as an aside, put me off whisky permanently.



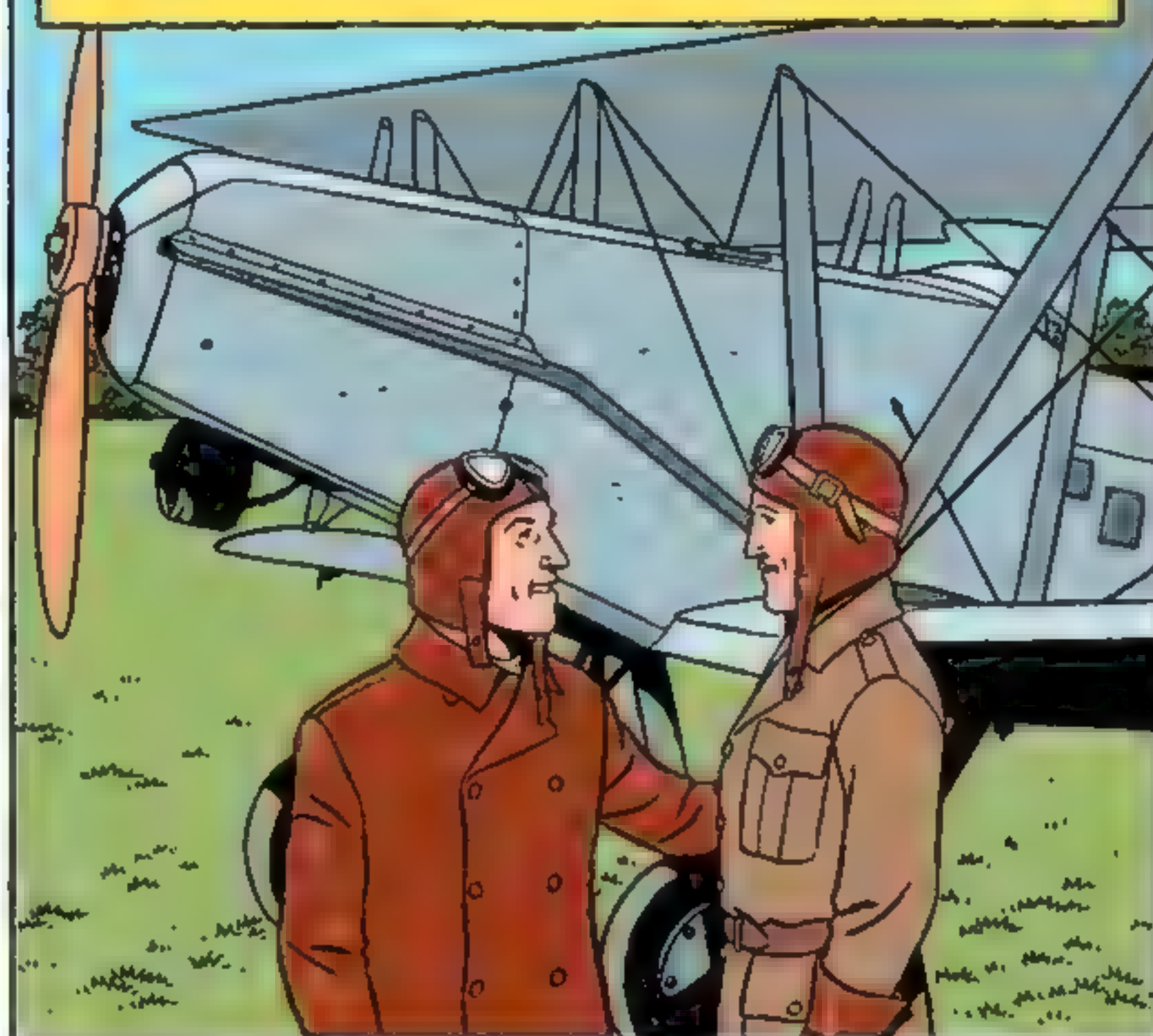
The next day, a bus dropped me off at the RAF staff college in Andover...



...where I quickly understood that if I wanted to be accepted by the rugged airmen of the RAF, I'd be better off erasing my time among the privileged few at Oxford from my curriculum vitae.



Once again, T.E. Lawrence came to my rescue. My knowledge of the victor of Aqaba and Damascus earned me the esteem of my instructors, who had welcomed him to the RAF as a simple aircraftman under the assumed name of John Hume Ross...



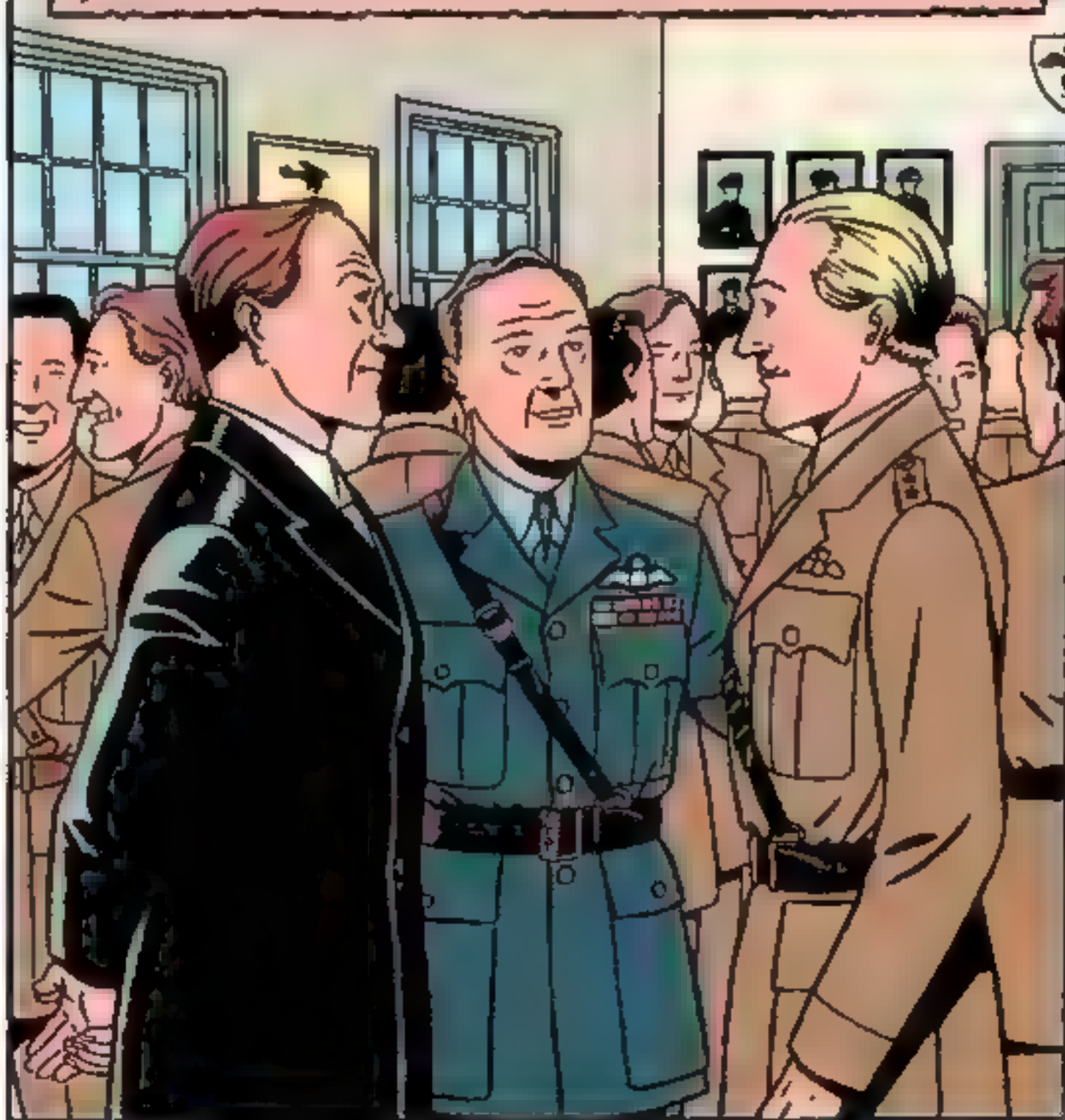
It was a particularly exciting time...



...which ended with a graduation, but also with an encounter that would change my life.



The Commandant of the staff college, Air Vice-Marshal W.R. Freeman, introduced me to a man that all military men believed to be a ghost and had nicknamed 'K': the famous Vernon Kell!

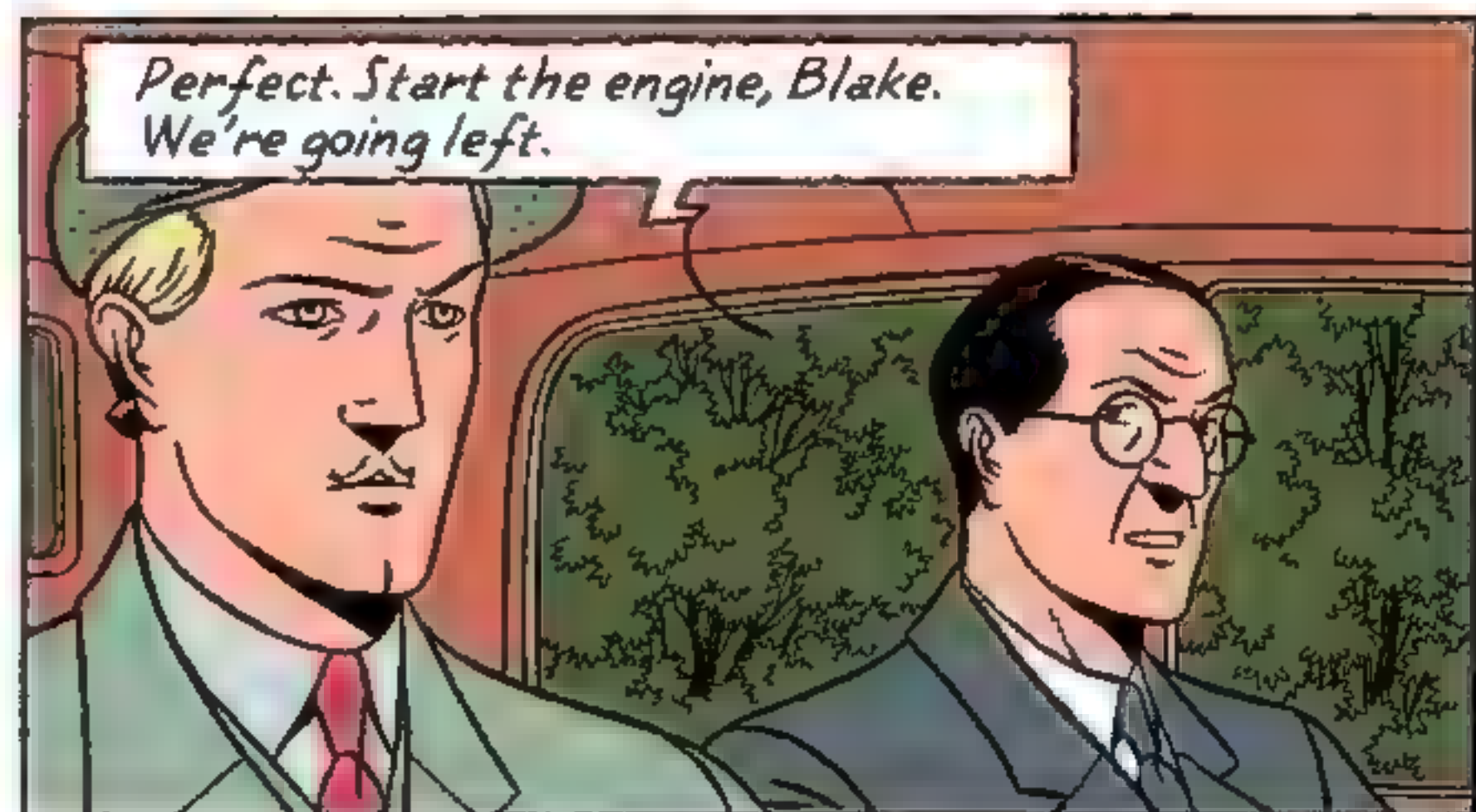
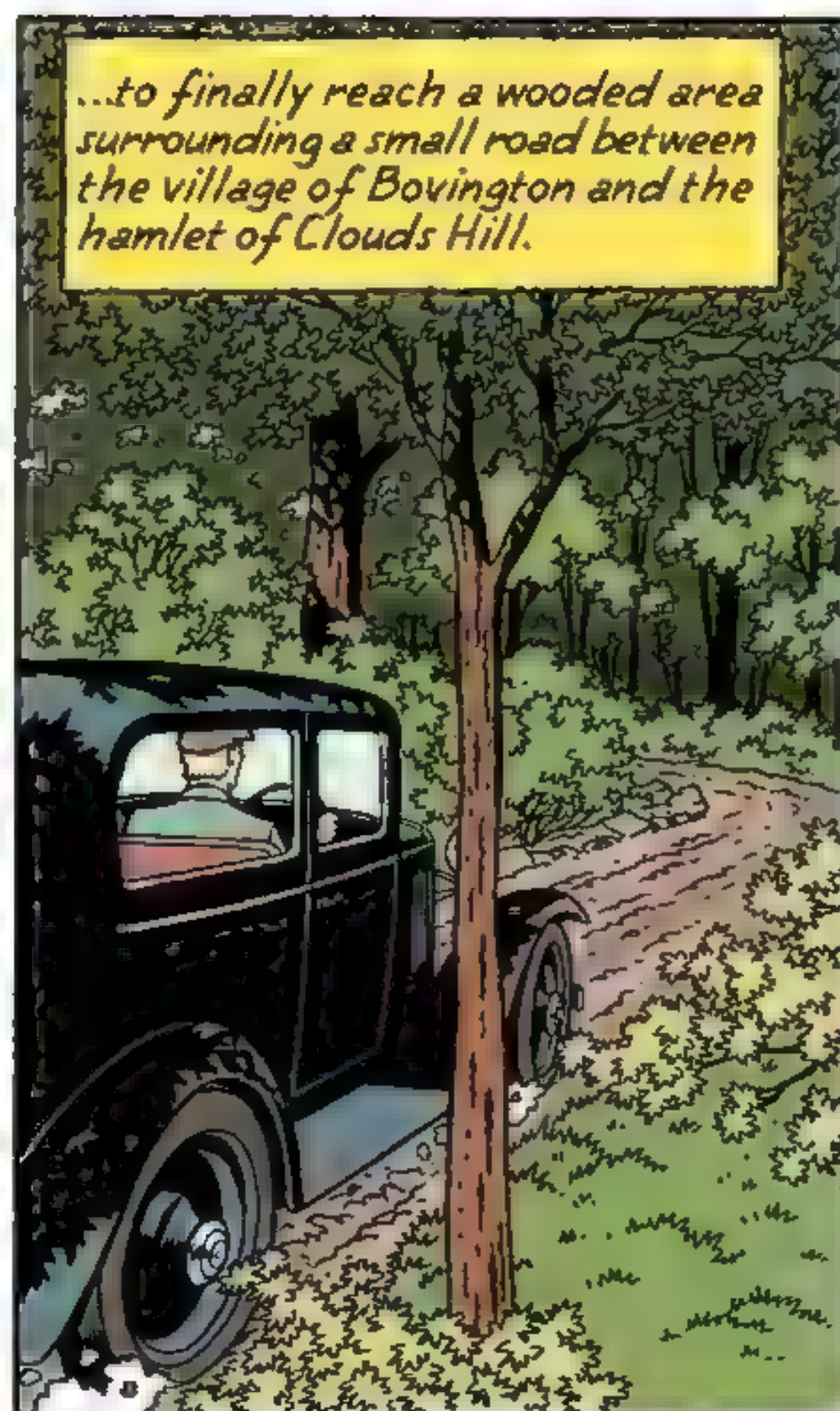
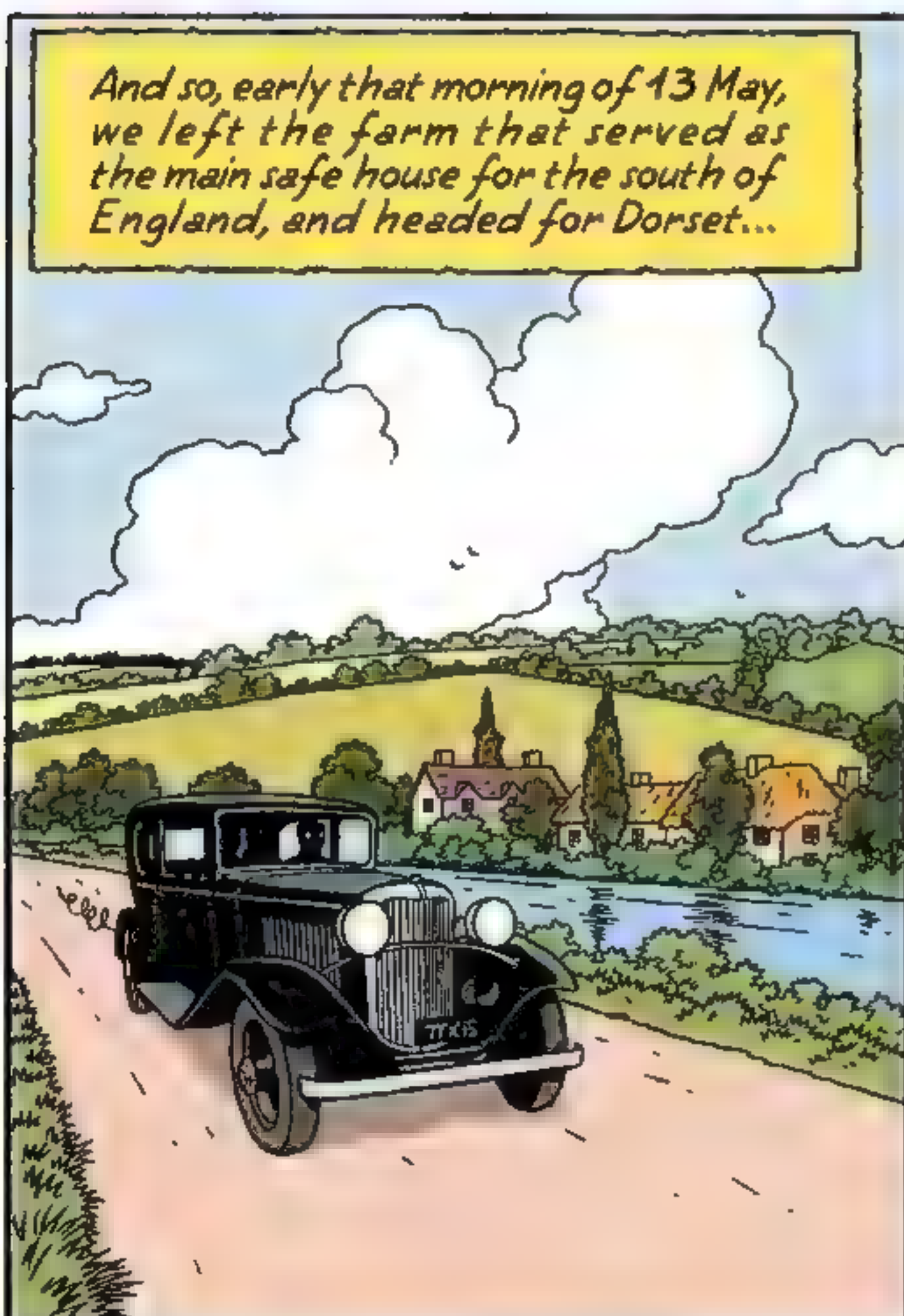
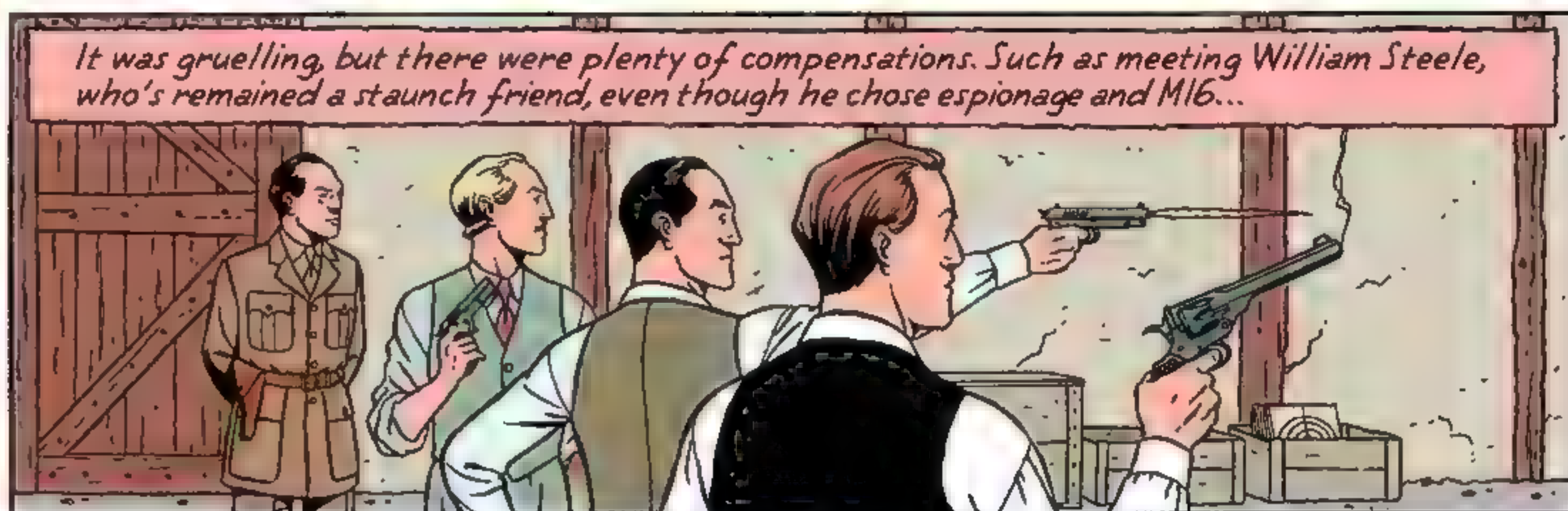
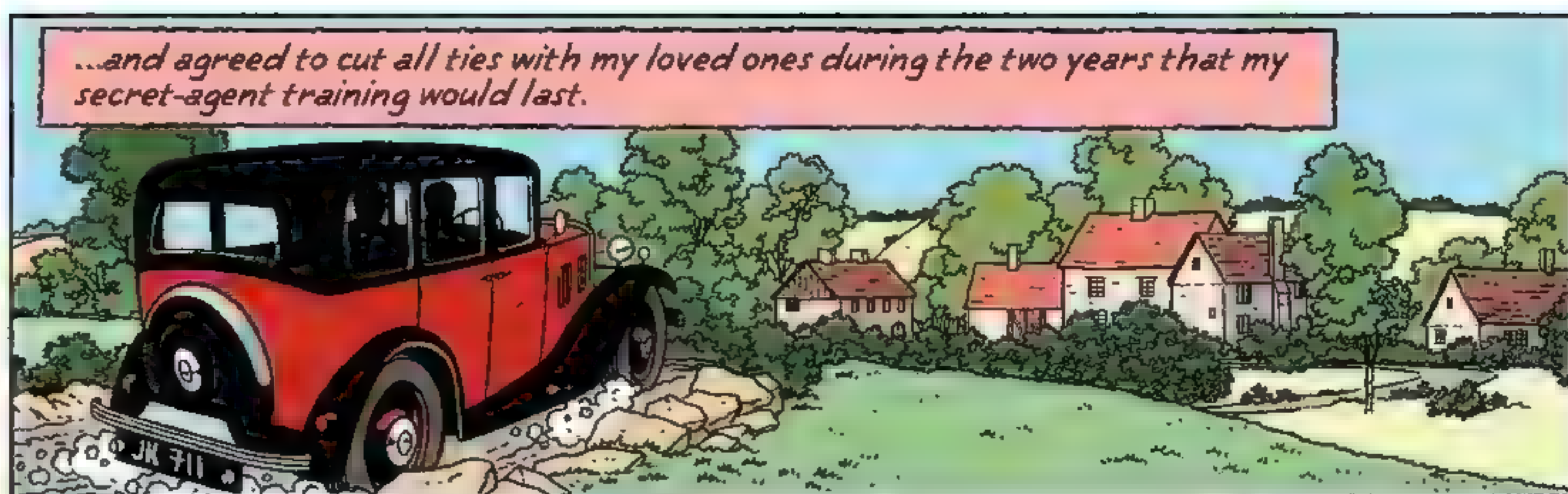


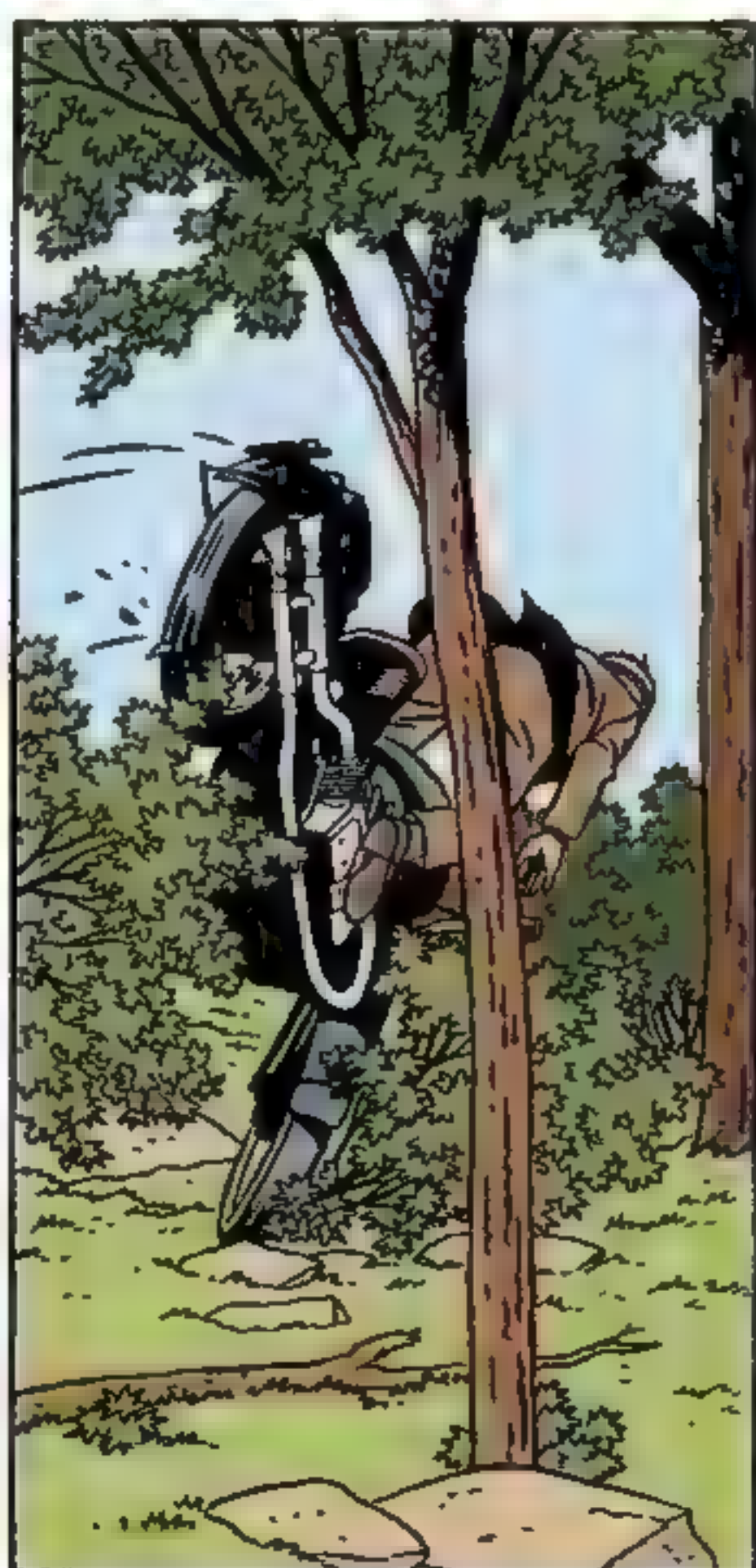
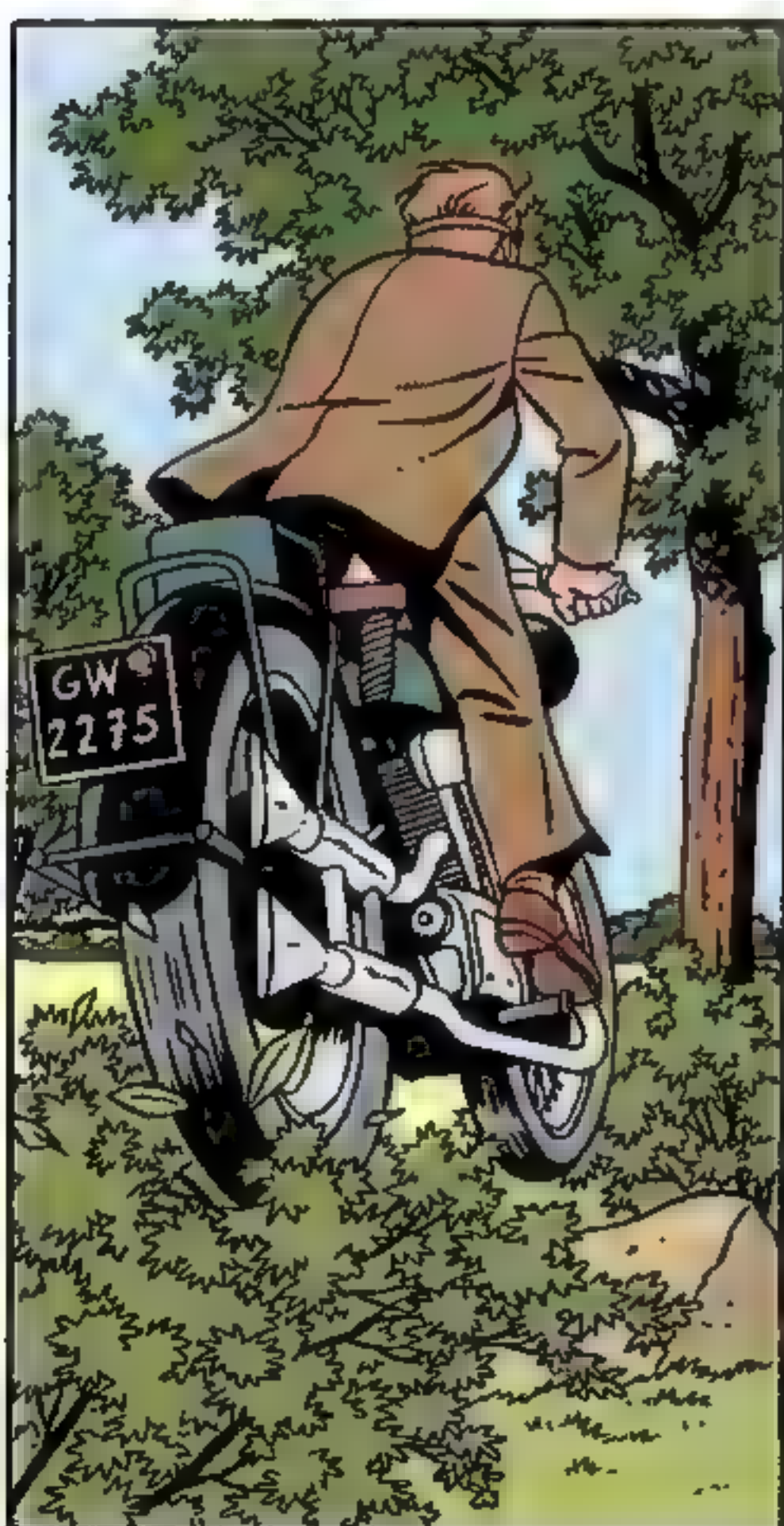
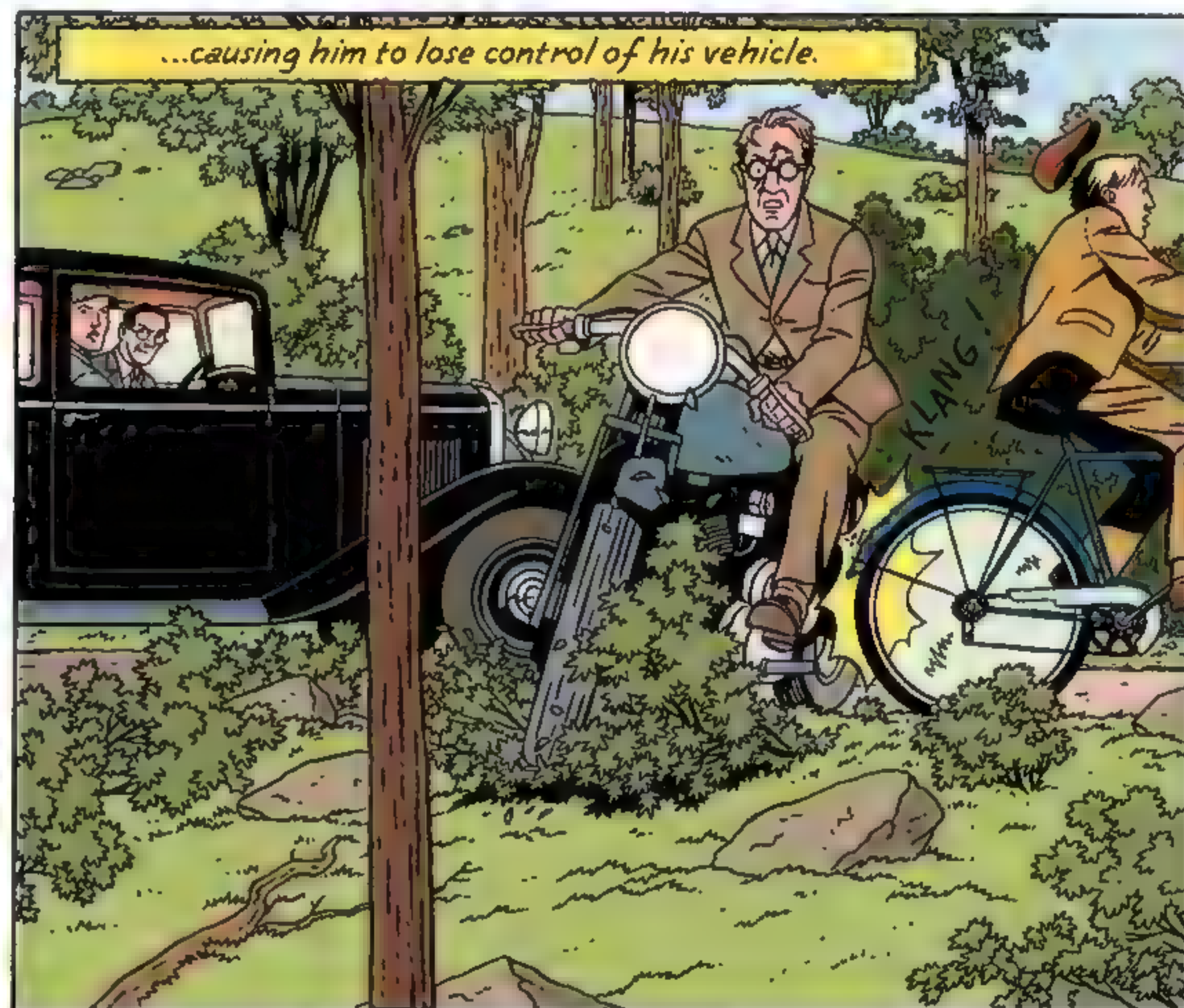
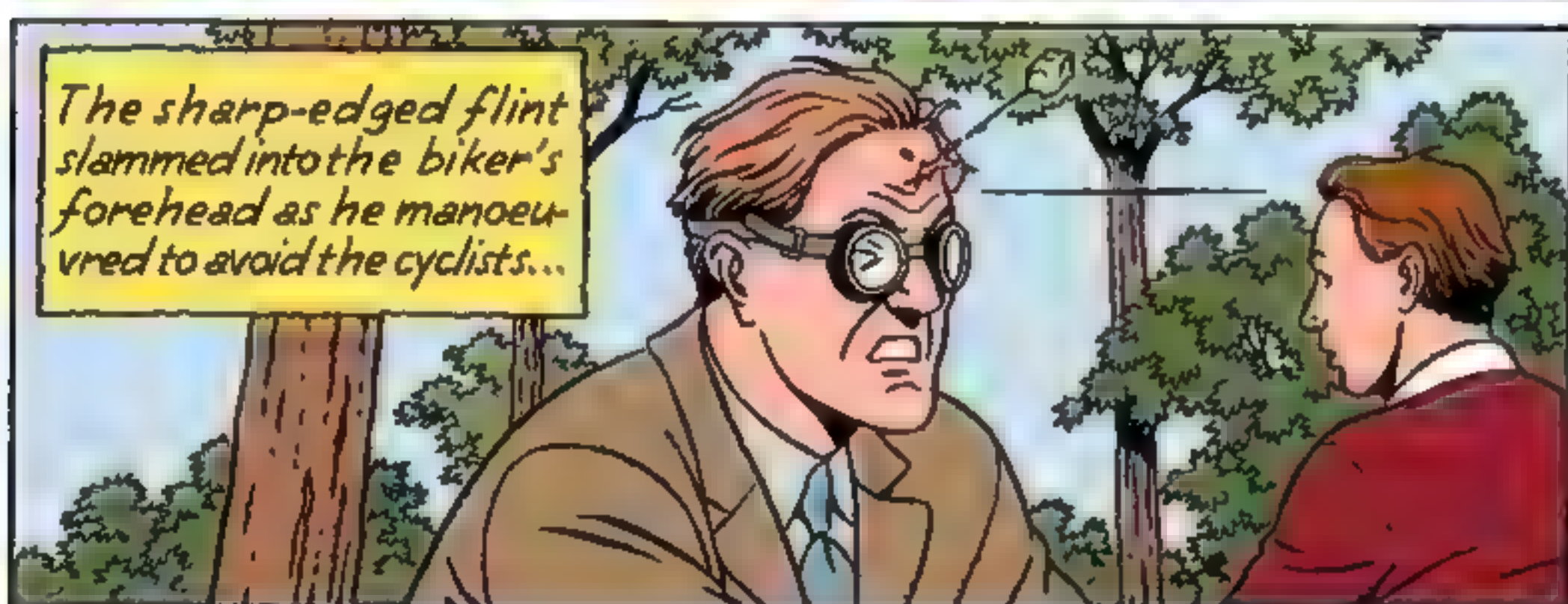
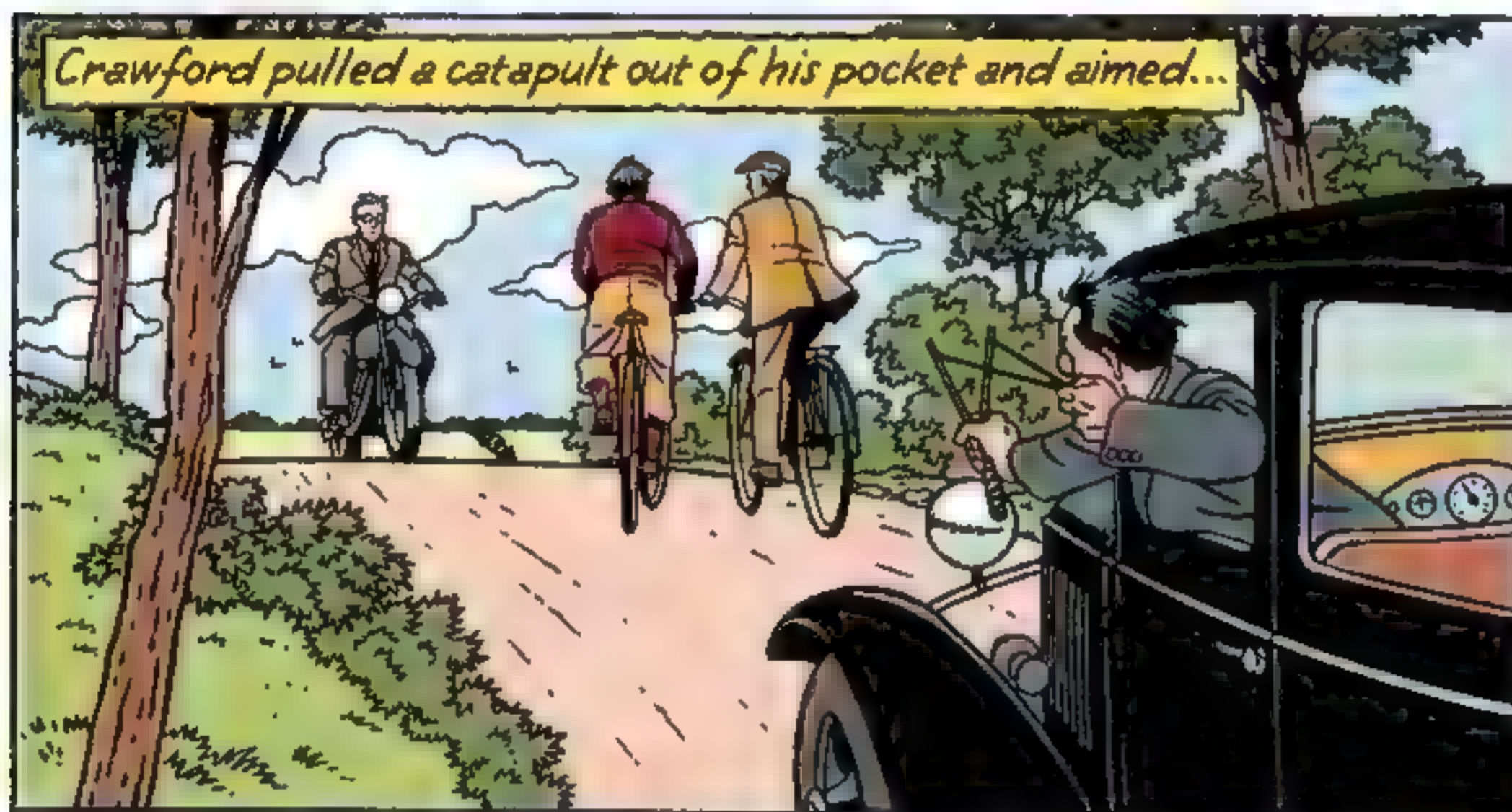
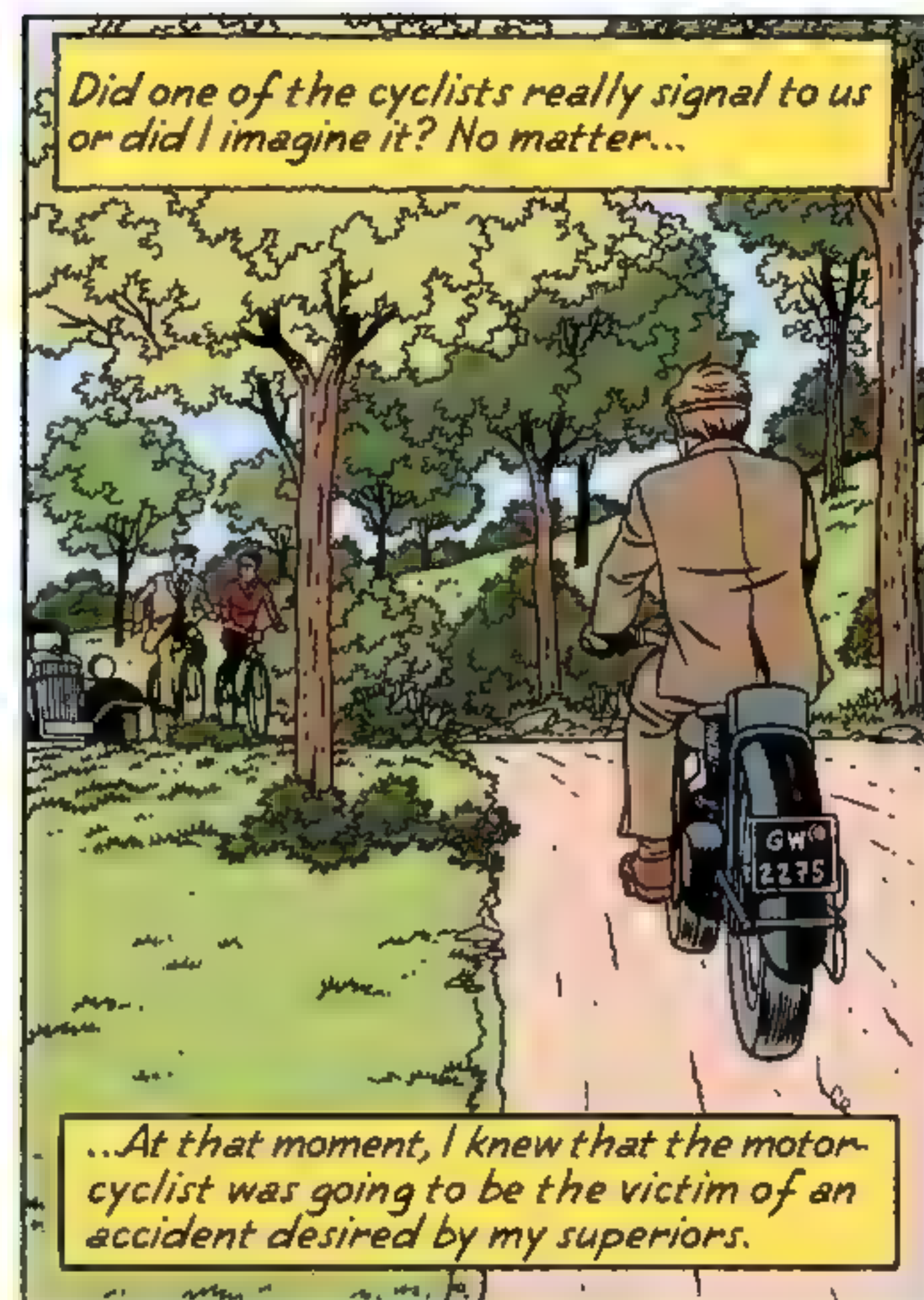
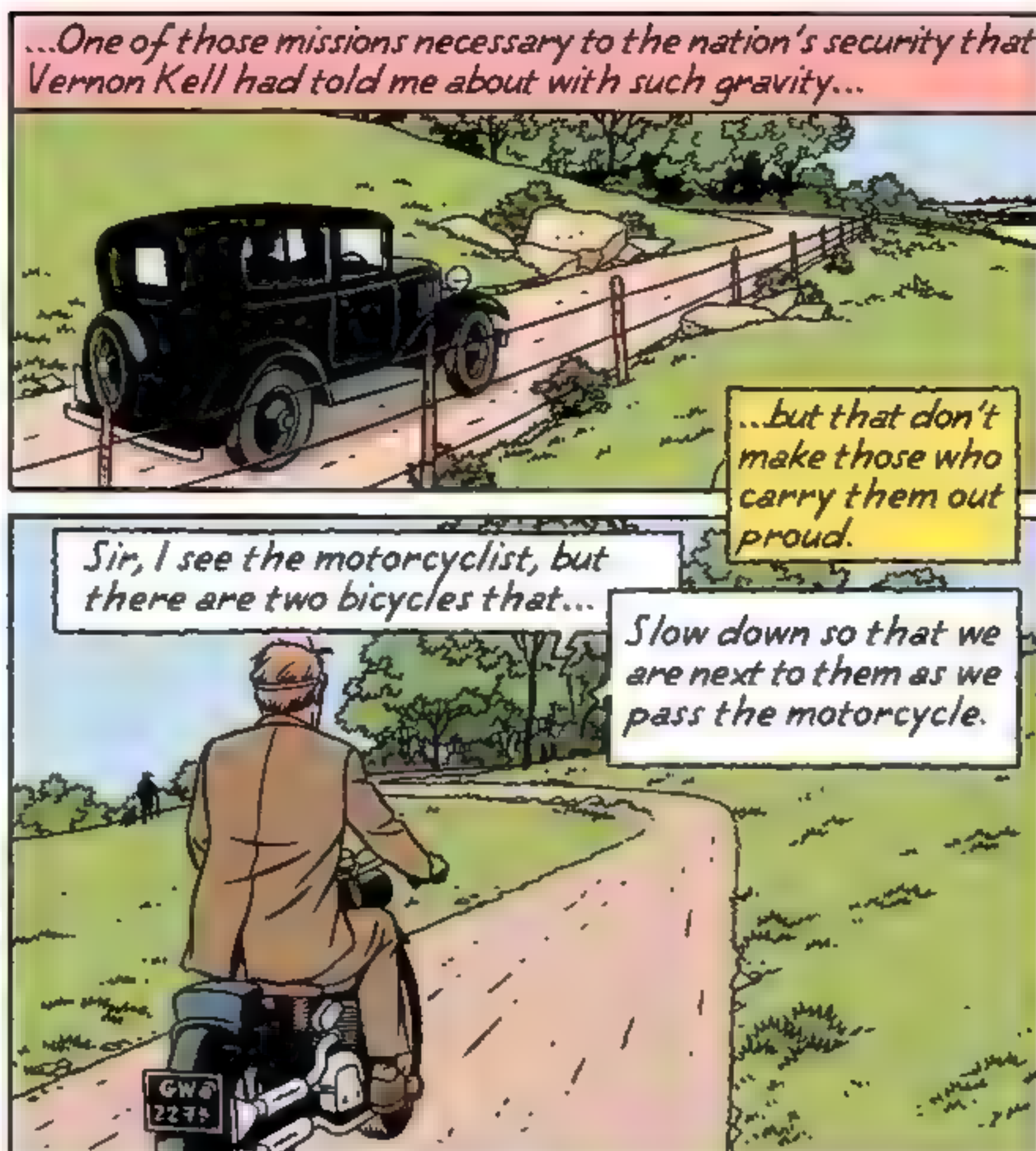
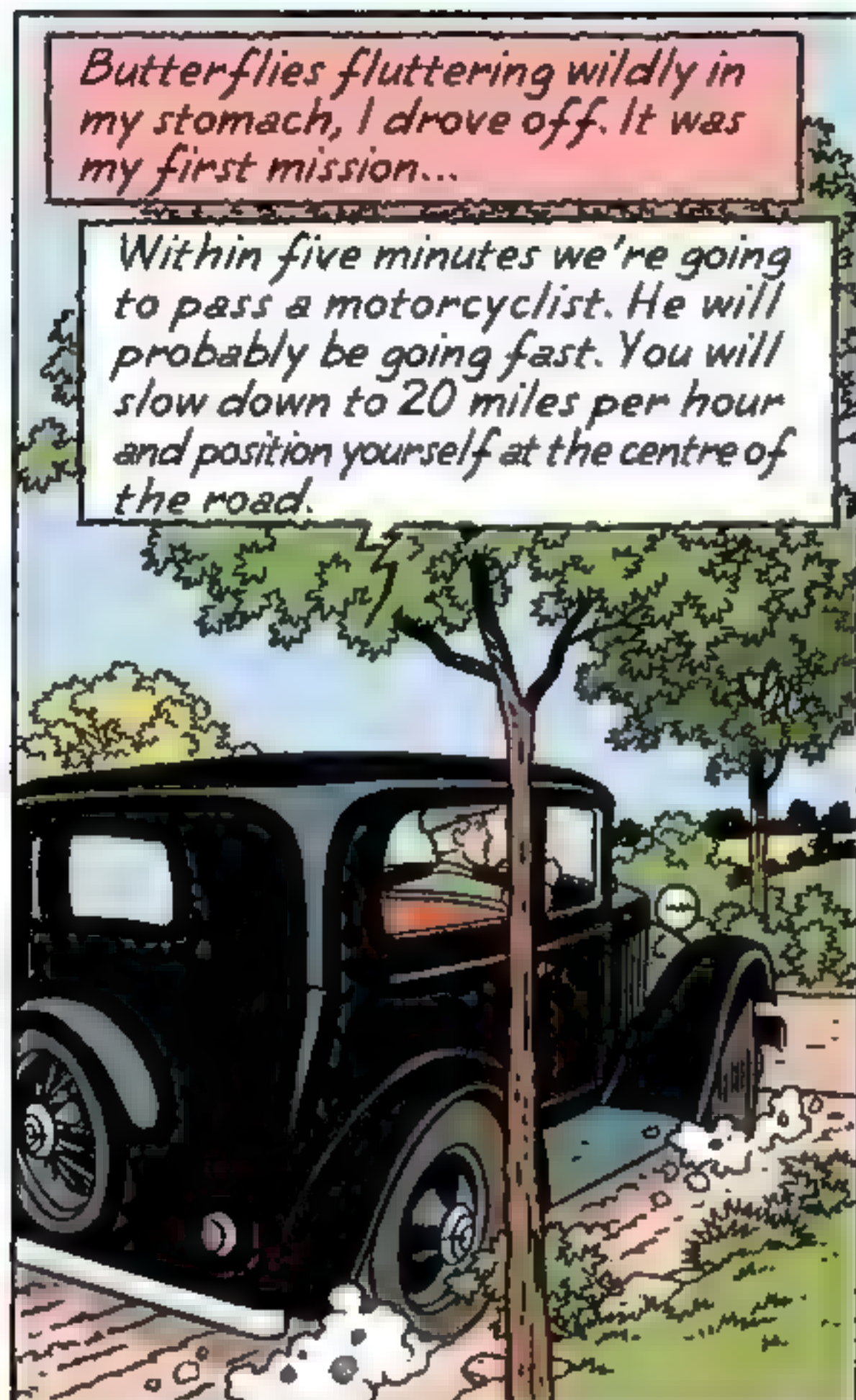
Vernon Kell?! The founder of the Secret Service Bureau?...

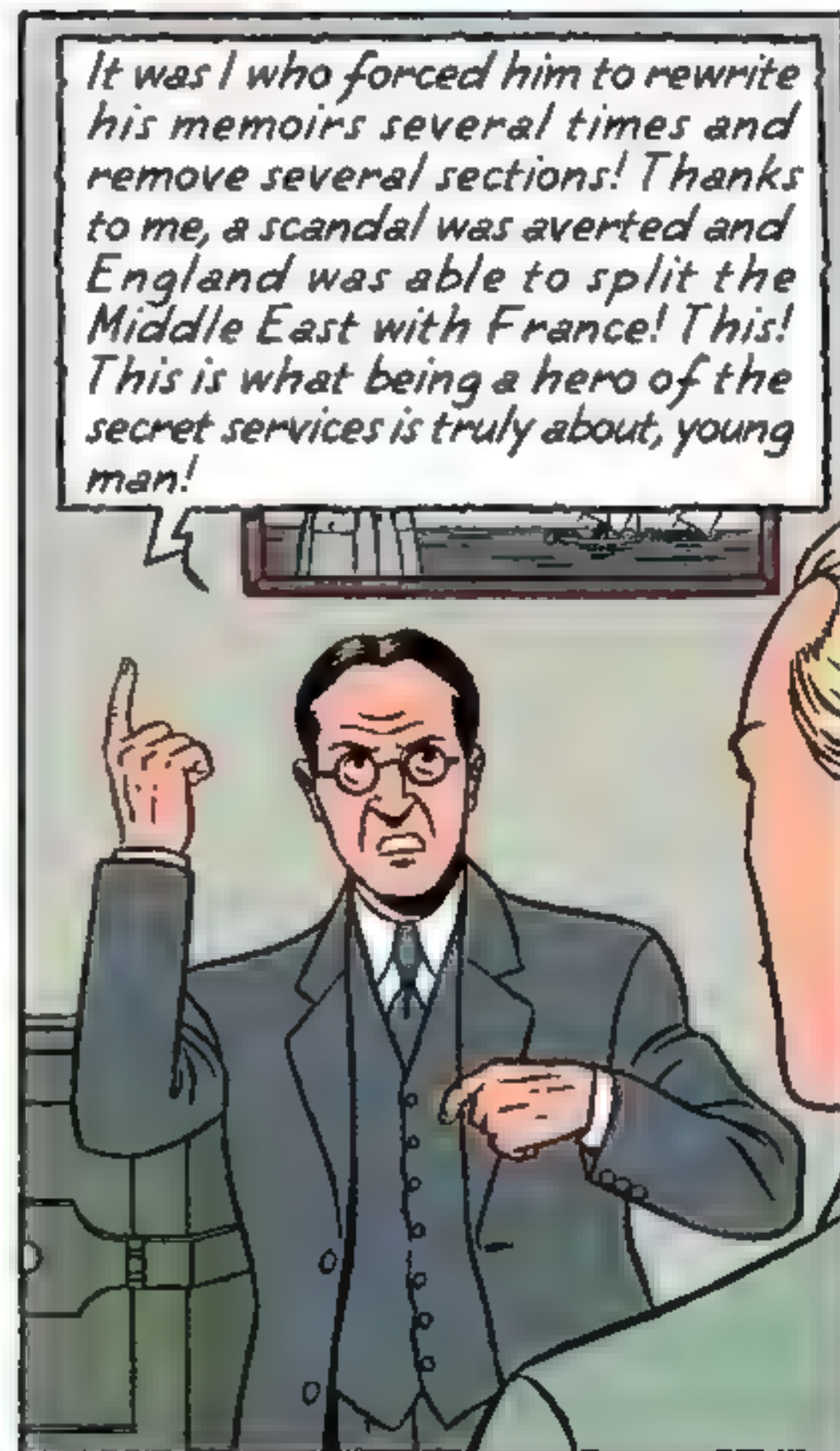
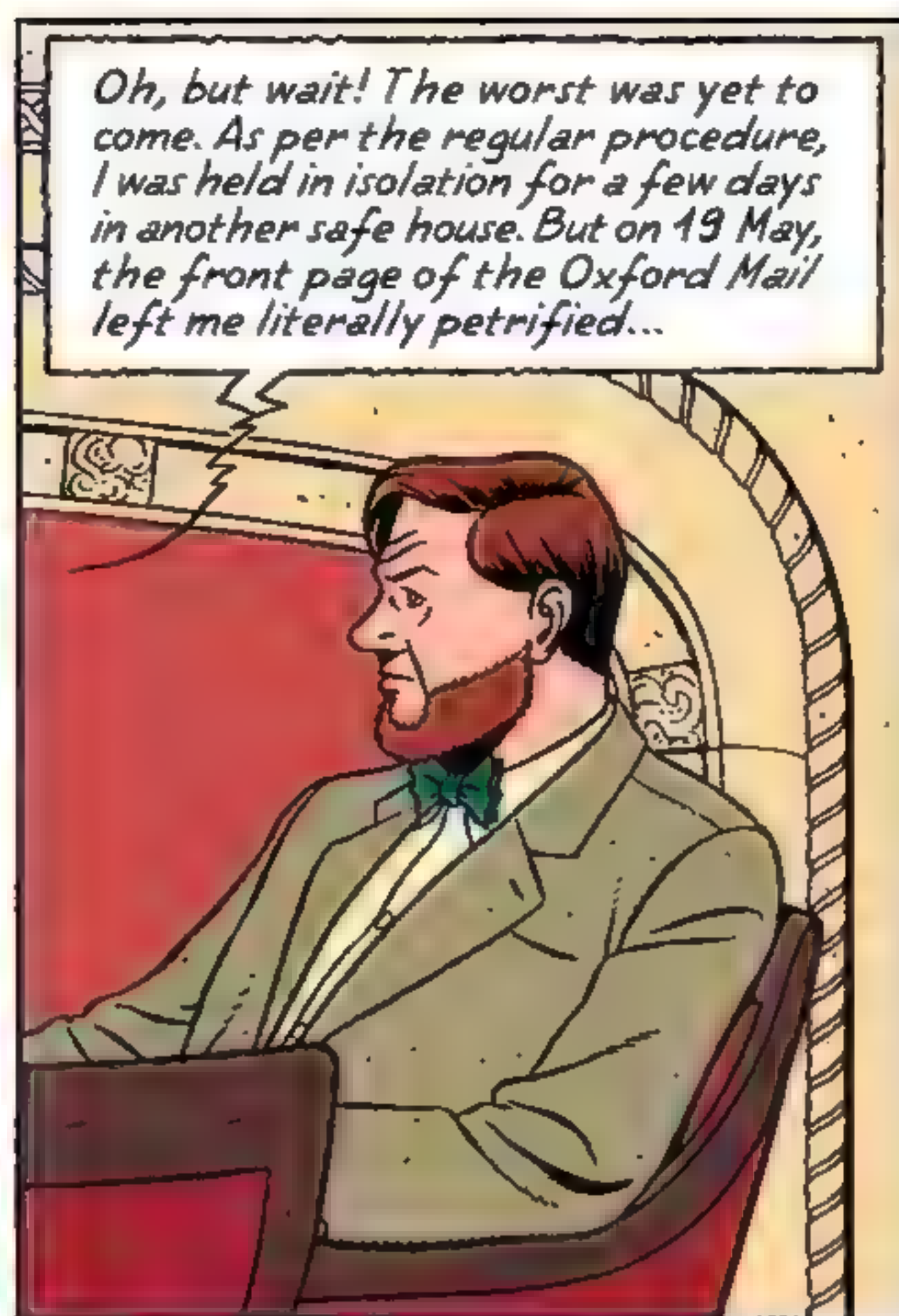
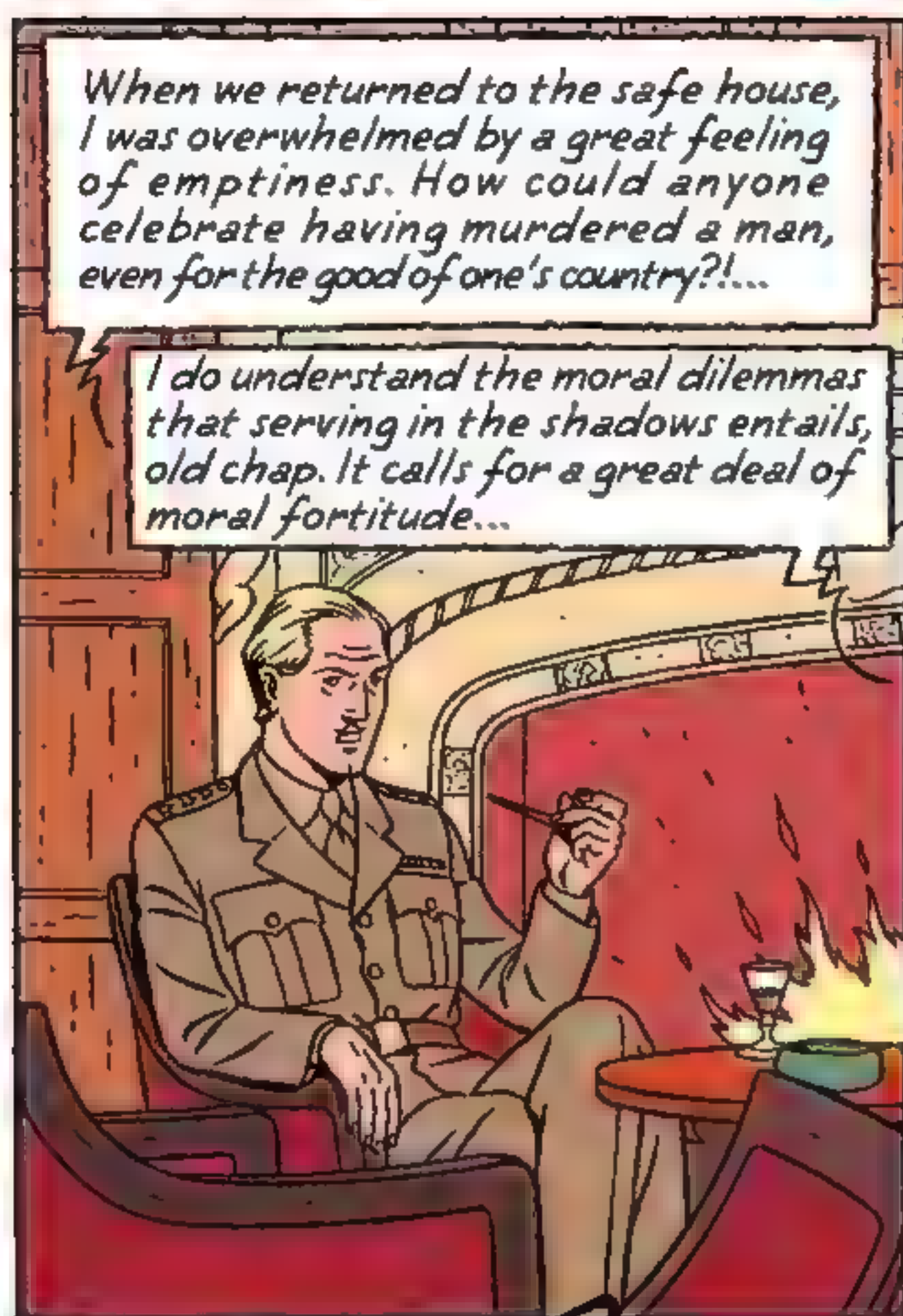


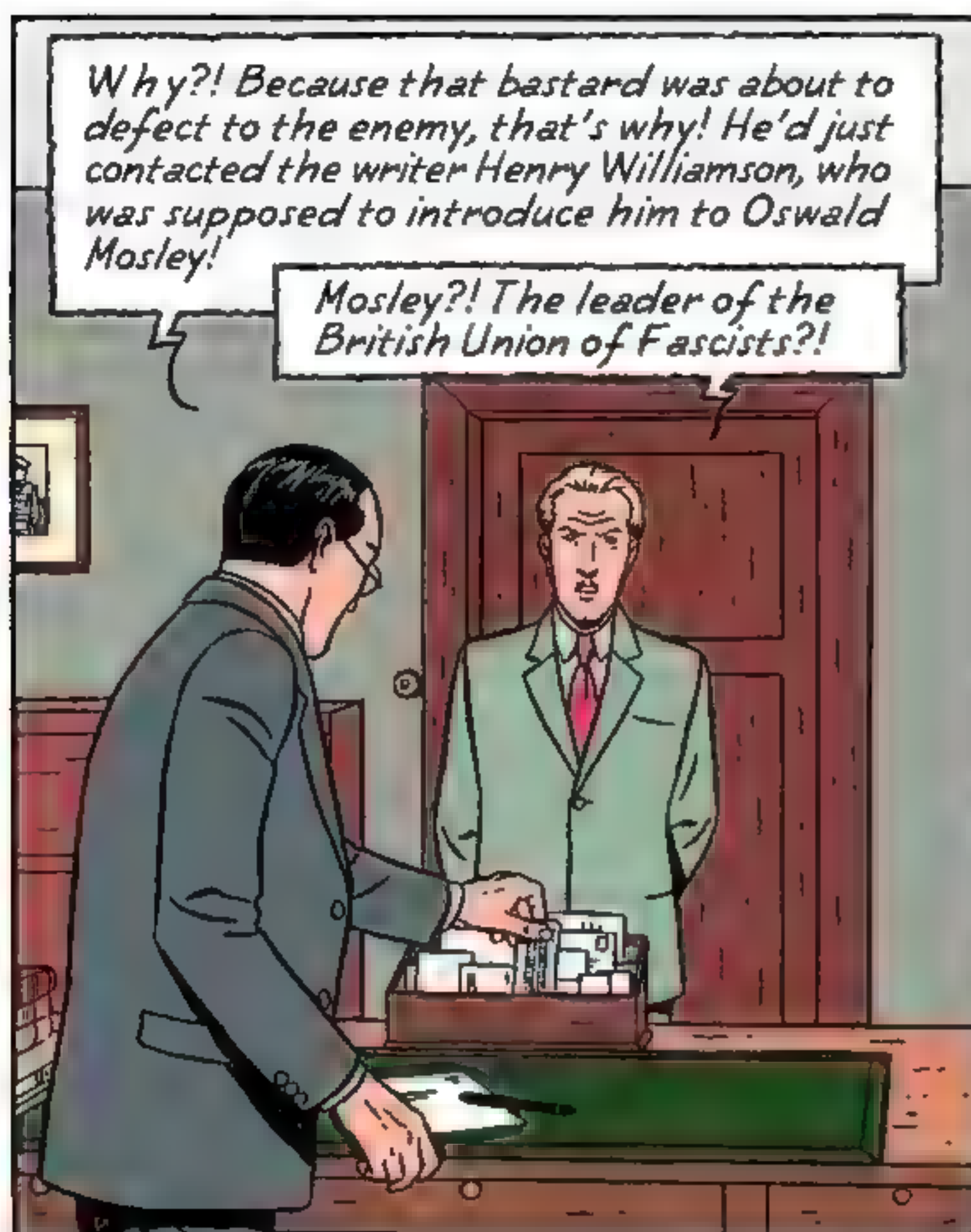
...Whose Home Section would become none other than MI5. And as you can guess, what must happen ... happened.











Why?! Because that bastard was about to defect to the enemy, that's why! He'd just contacted the writer Henry Williamson, who was supposed to introduce him to Oswald Mosley!

Mosley?! The leader of the British Union of Fascists?!



The very same! He's desperately been trying to rally famous individuals to his cause to destabilise our government! And, once again, Lawrence was about to betray his country! This telegram confirming his meeting with Williamson - I didn't make it up!



Wake up, Blake! Forget your simplistic view of the world divided between good Britons and evil, distant foreigners! The enemy is also among us. And the role of M15 is to hunt him down wherever he's hiding! Go and meditate on that!



Coming out of Crawford's office, I met William Steele. Seeing how troubled I was, he asked if something was wrong. So I told him the same story you just heard ... and his reaction astounded me!



What?! It was Crawford who had Lawrence killed? But that pillock got it all wrong! My boss at M16 is the one who personally asked Lawrence to infiltrate Mosley's ranks to keep an eye on him better! Lawrence had just retired from the Army... He agreed.



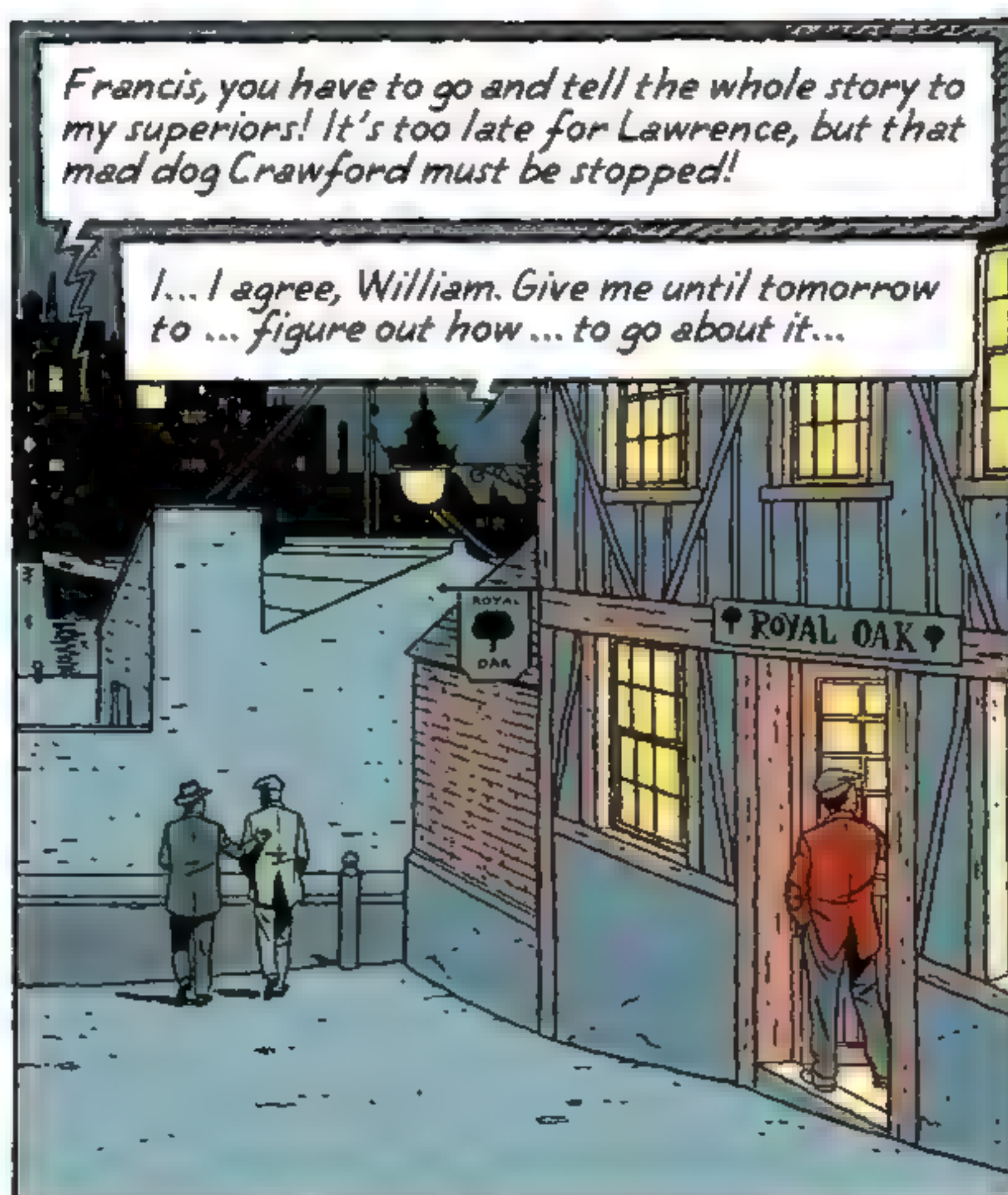
Crawford acted without orders? Why?...



Crawford has had a personal grudge against Lawrence ever since 1917, when the latter publicly slapped him in the officer's mess in Cairo. Lawrence had arrived in Bedouin garb along with a young Arab guide. Crawford had the bad idea of mocking Lawrence's 'special affection for Arabs'... A week later, Crawford was dismissed from the Army by General Allenby himself.



...And Crawford never forgave Lawrence, which explains why he's kept at him after he retrained for the secret services and discovered that manuscript in 1919...



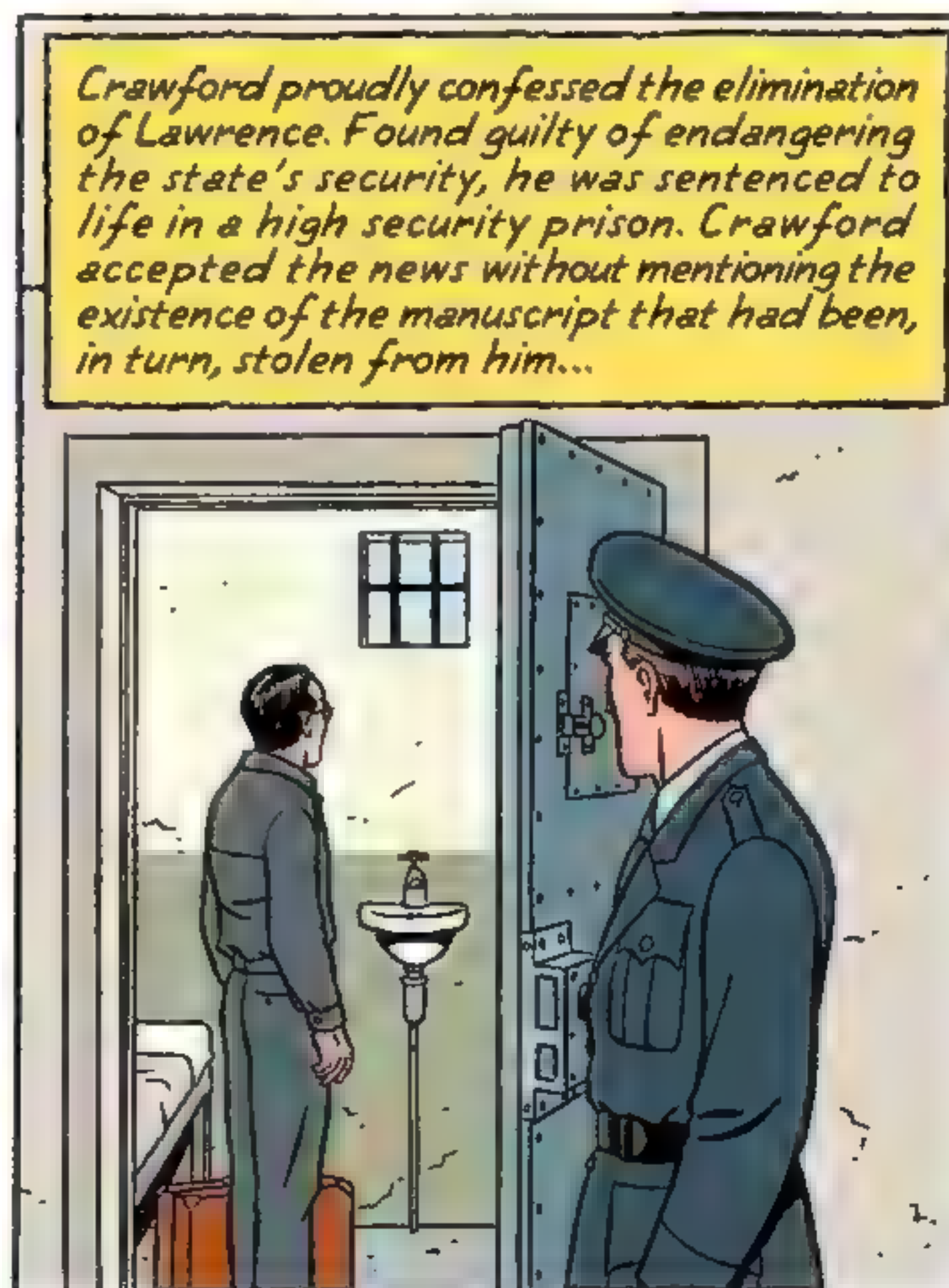
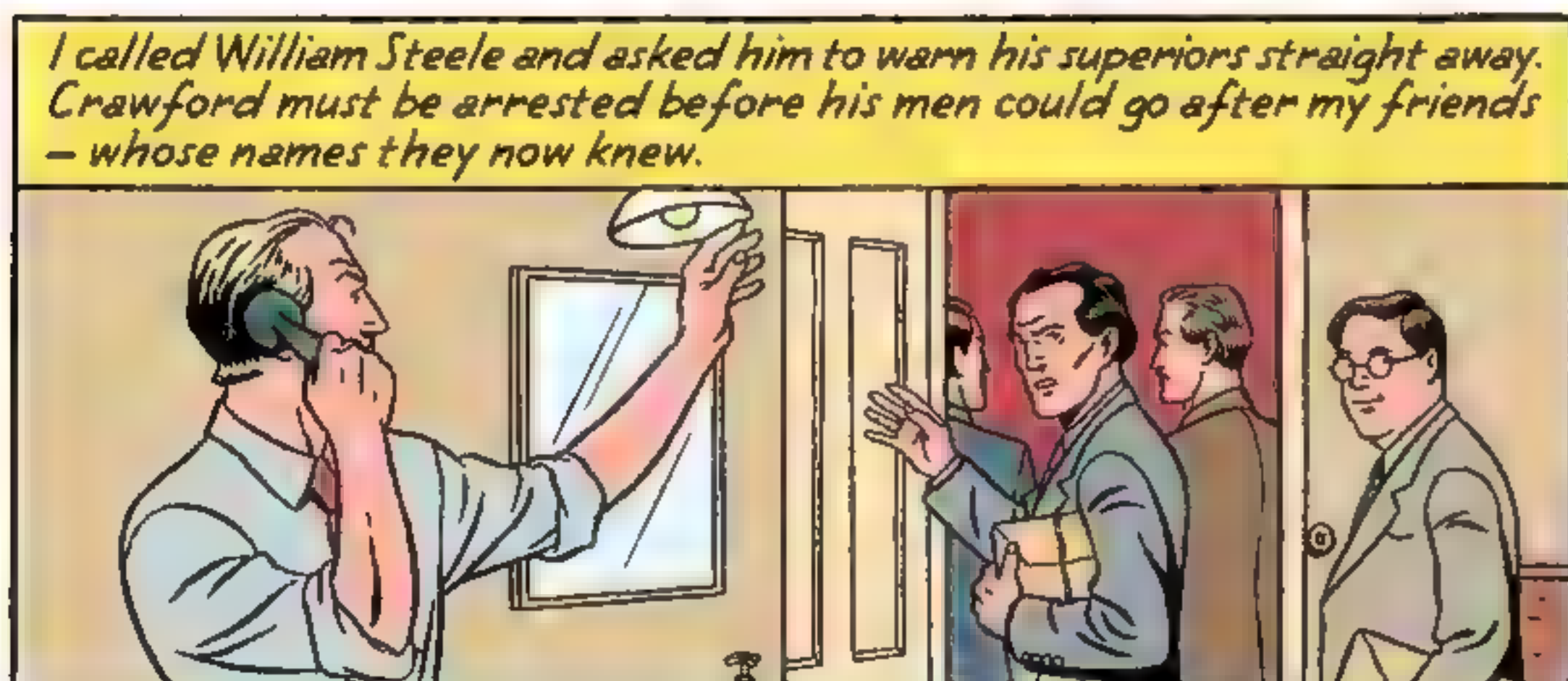
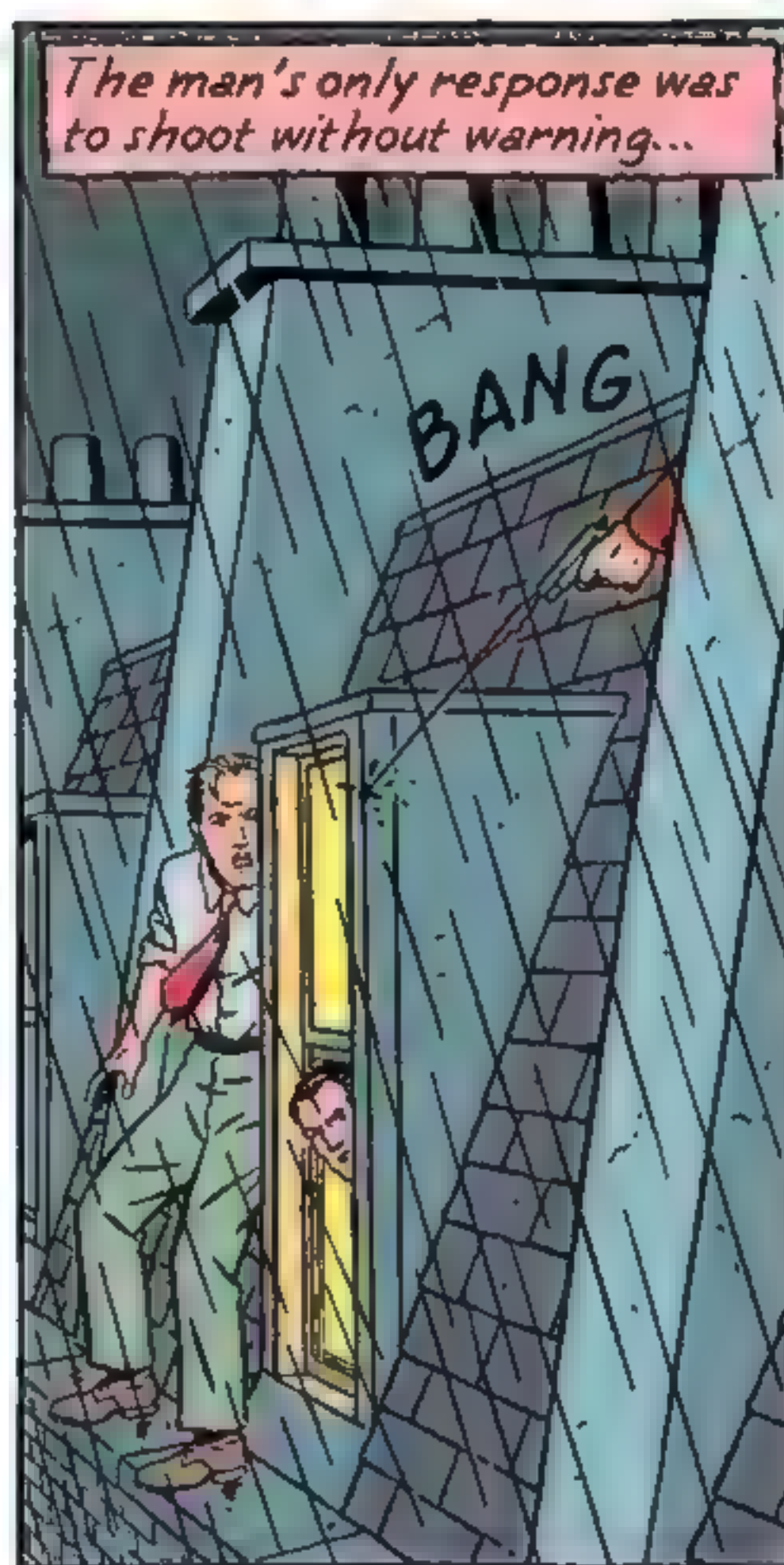
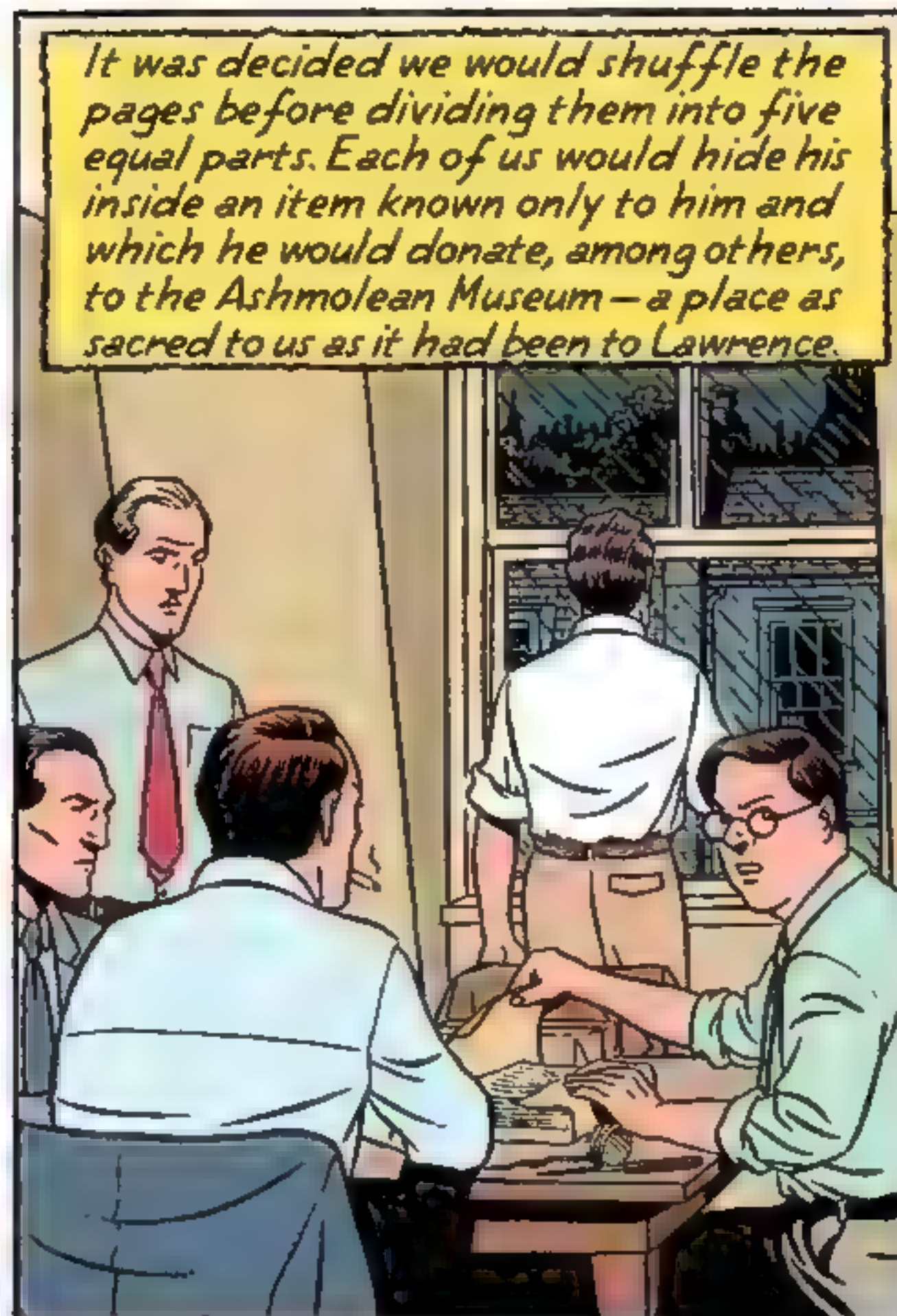
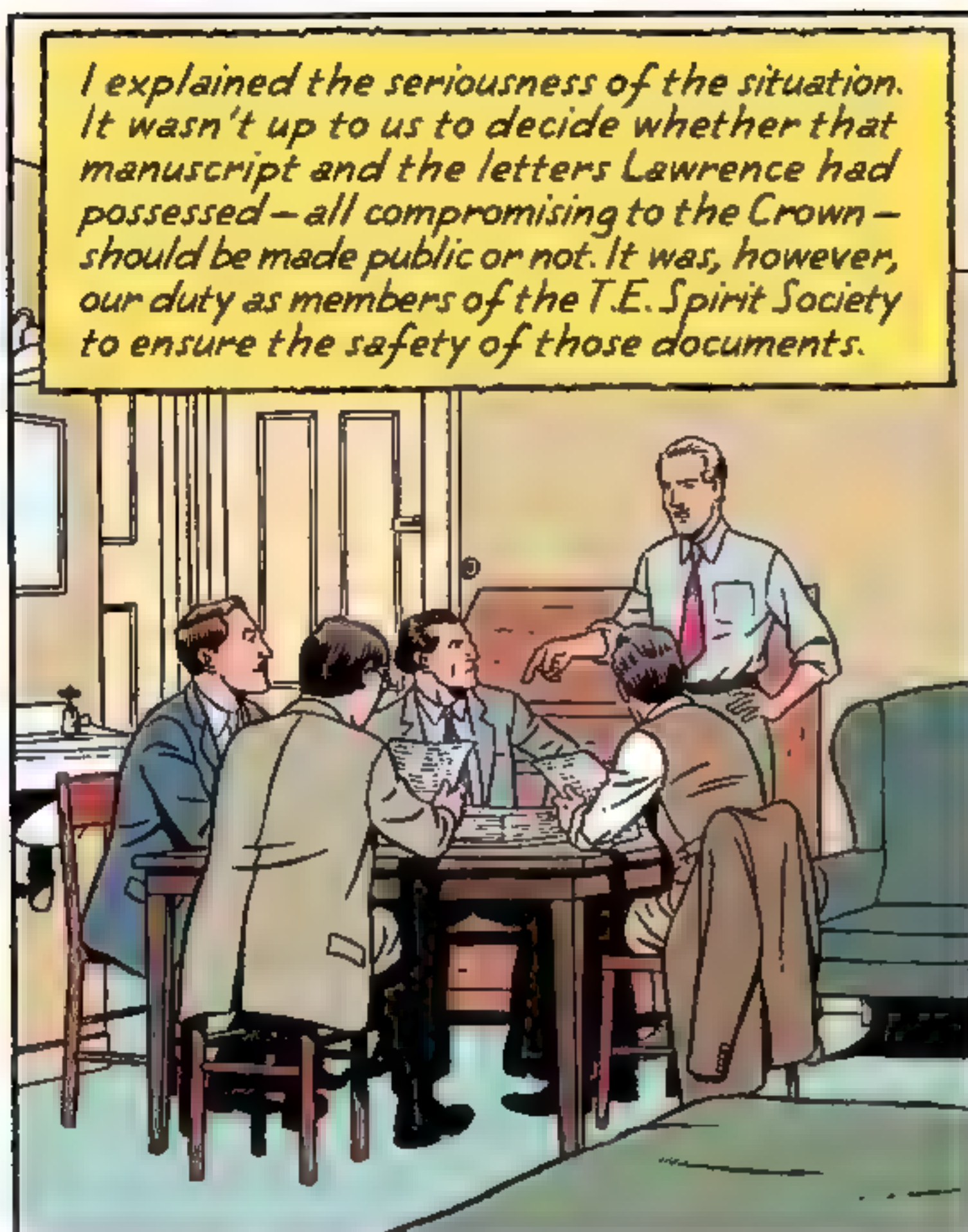
Francis, you have to go and tell the whole story to my superiors! It's too late for Lawrence, but that mad dog Crawford must be stopped!

I... I agree, William. Give me until tomorrow to ... figure out how ... to go about it...

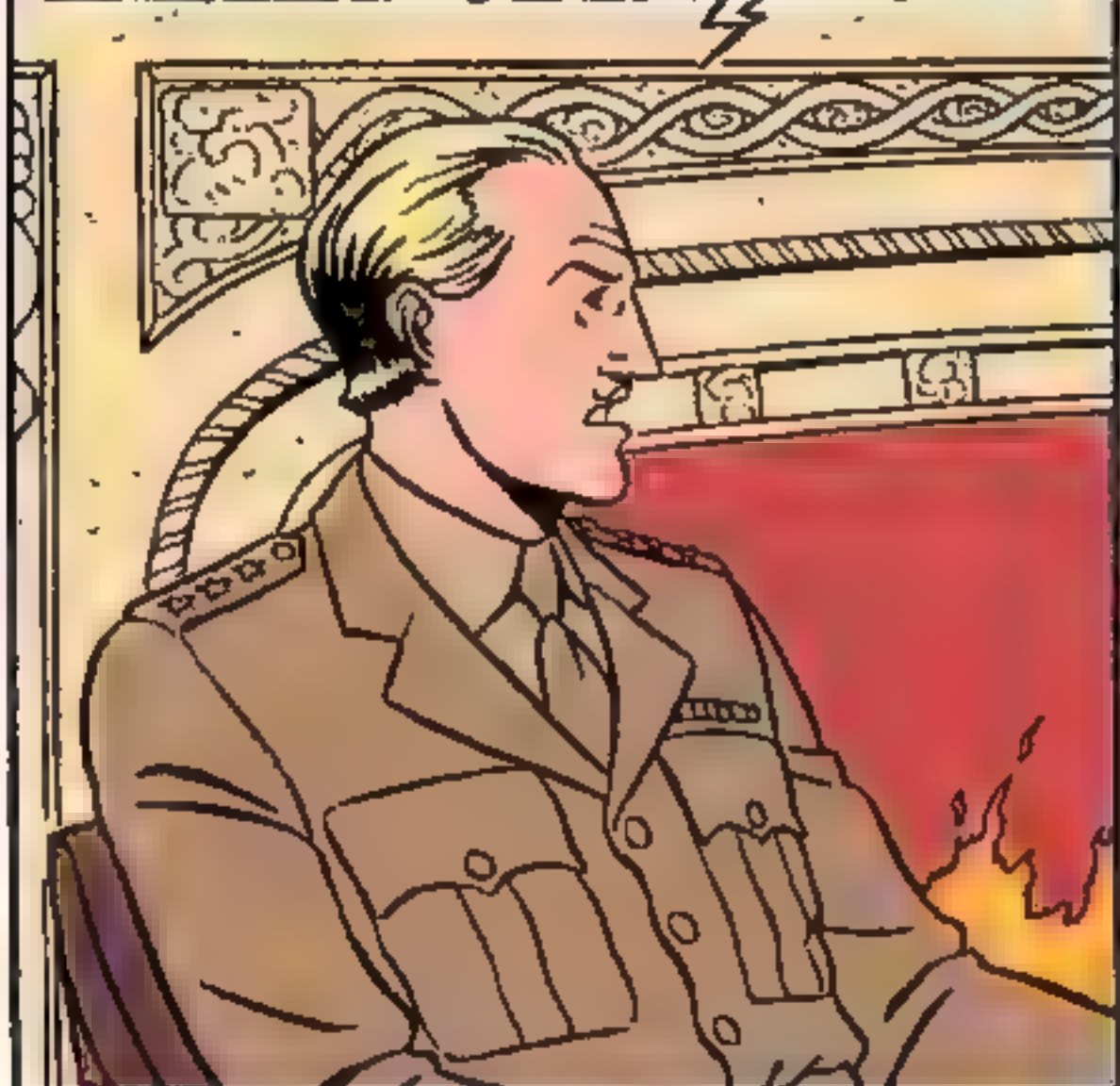


Crawford had led me up the garden path, and he'd be doing his utmost to ensure all witnesses of the assassination would confirm the accident theory - or be discredited. I had to redeem myself for my involuntary participation in that despicable personal vengeance...





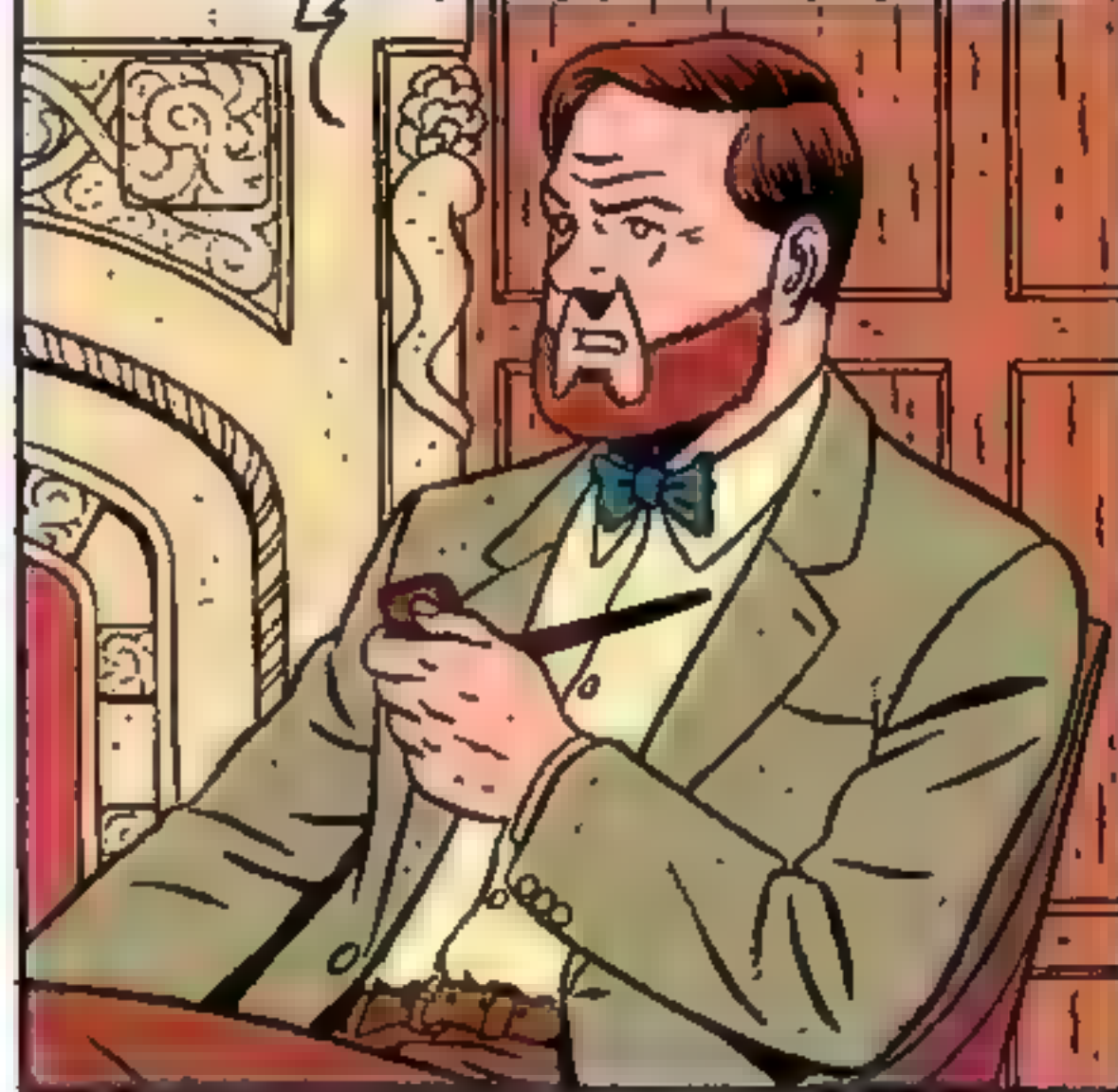
As for the T.E. Spirit Society, each member honoured his oath. Until the past caught up to them ... and I learnt that, just before dying, Crawford had written a letter to his infant son, who was supposed to read it upon reaching 20.



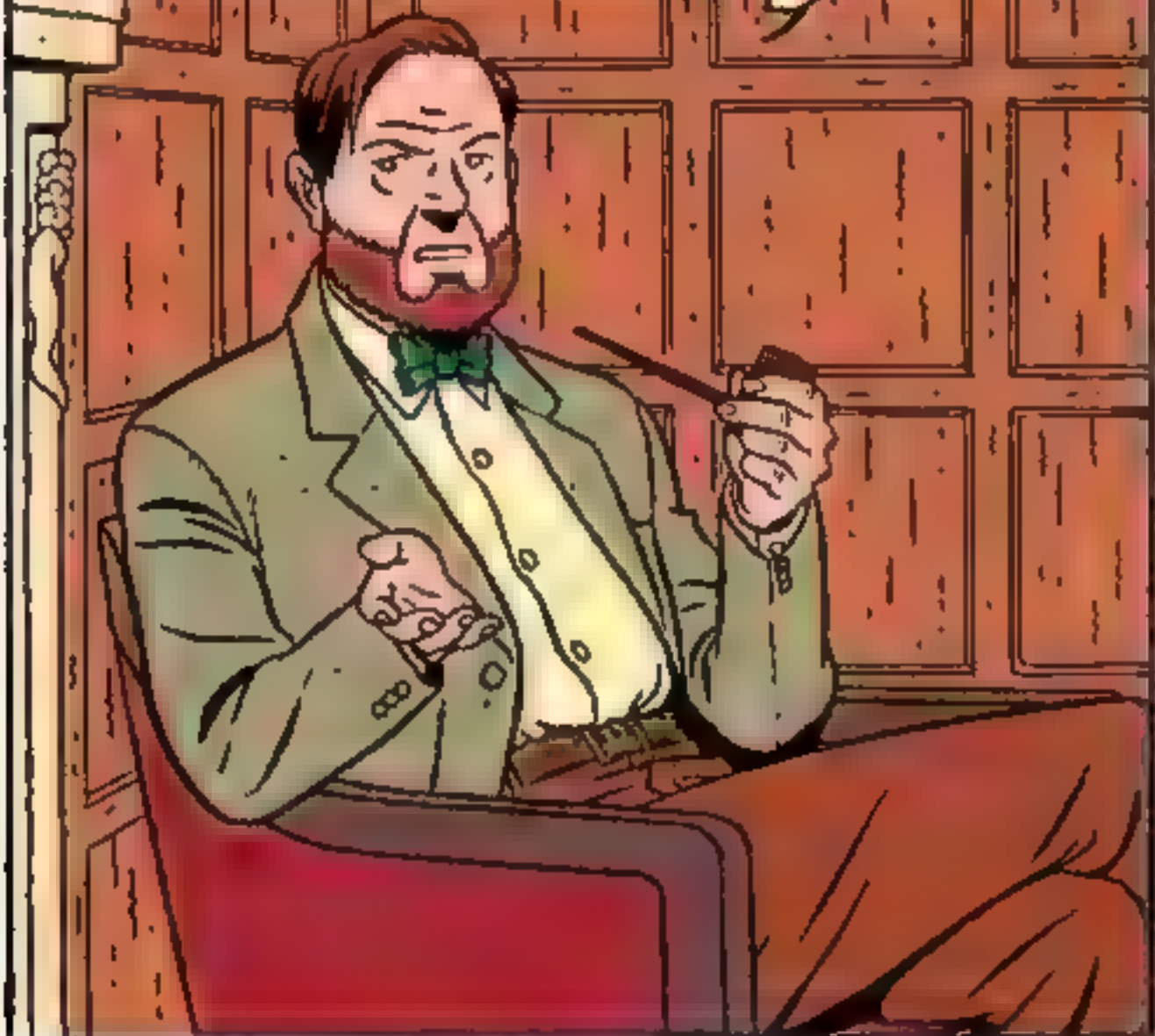
What a story! If I understand correctly, in 1919 T.E. Lawrence had a manuscript stolen from him by Crawford, the publication of which could have damaged the government's negotiations with the Arab peoples.



Sixteen years later, Crawford was convinced that Lawrence was about to betray England to the Fascists and took advantage of the situation to eliminate him ... derailing the plans of MI6, which arrested him after you and your comrades had retrieved the stolen manuscript.



Before killing himself in prison, Crawford wrote a letter to his son in which he probably portrayed himself as a martyred hero. He must have given the names of the five holders of the manuscript, given to him by his spy on the very night he was arrested. Is that it?



I couldn't have summarised it better myself! And now the second child, whose existence I only recently discovered, got it into their head to avenge their father.

The same old motive - vengeance...

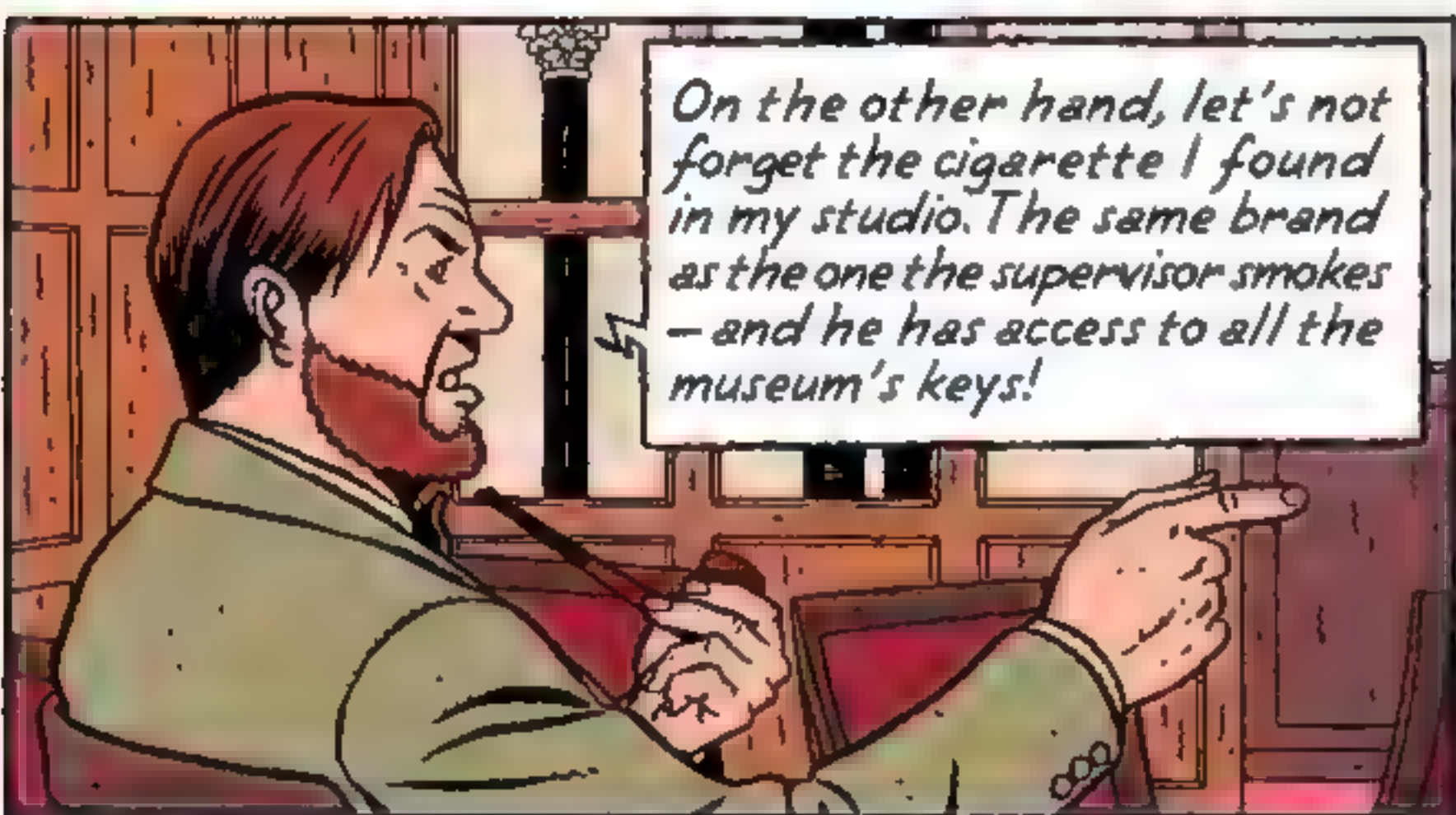


Beyond the fact that John Hastings is actually Crawford's son, there's also the anonymous note to Lord Devlin, written on Mansfield College letterhead paper. And the racing cycle found on the Dorset road...

Hmm...



On the other hand, let's not forget the cigarette I found in my studio. The same brand as the one the supervisor smokes - and he has access to all the museum's keys!



We'll know soon. I'm the only one to know where the last pages of the manuscript are hidden. Tomorrow we'll set a trap for our killer ... whether it's John Hastings or someone else!

Tomorrow? What if he decides to act before then?!



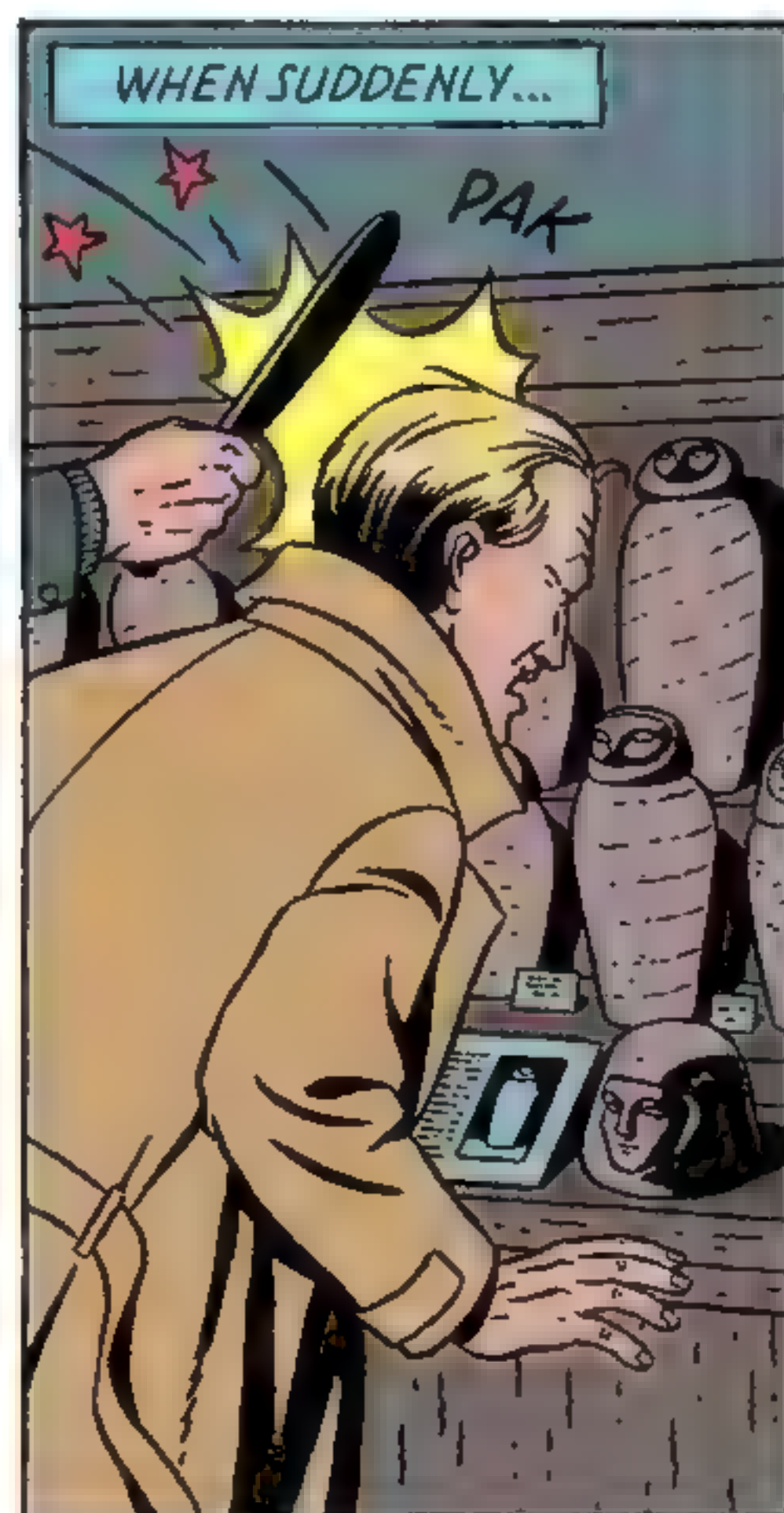
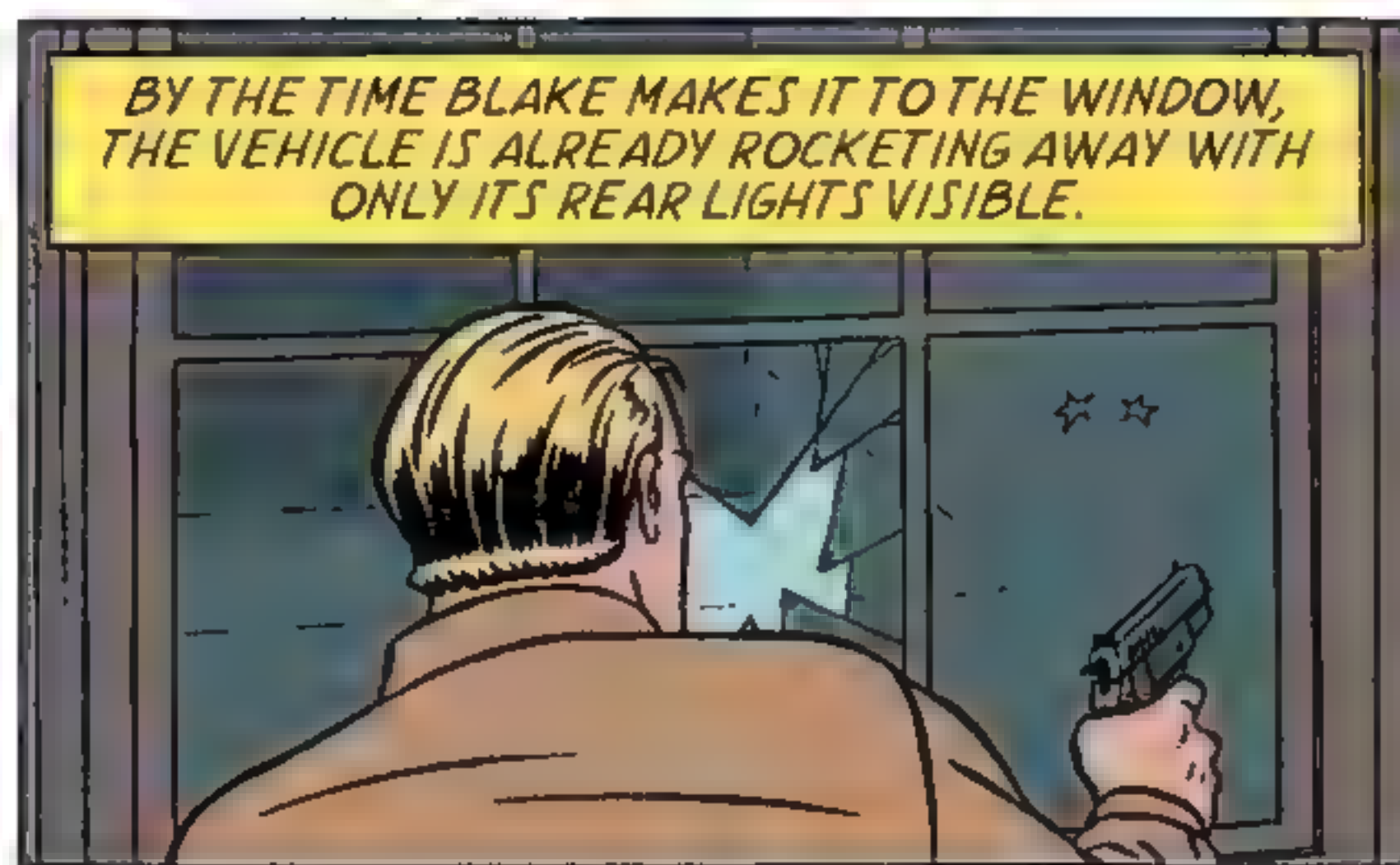
Don't worry, old chap. I'll park myself in one of my room's armchairs. That White Shadow had better not pay me a visit tonight.

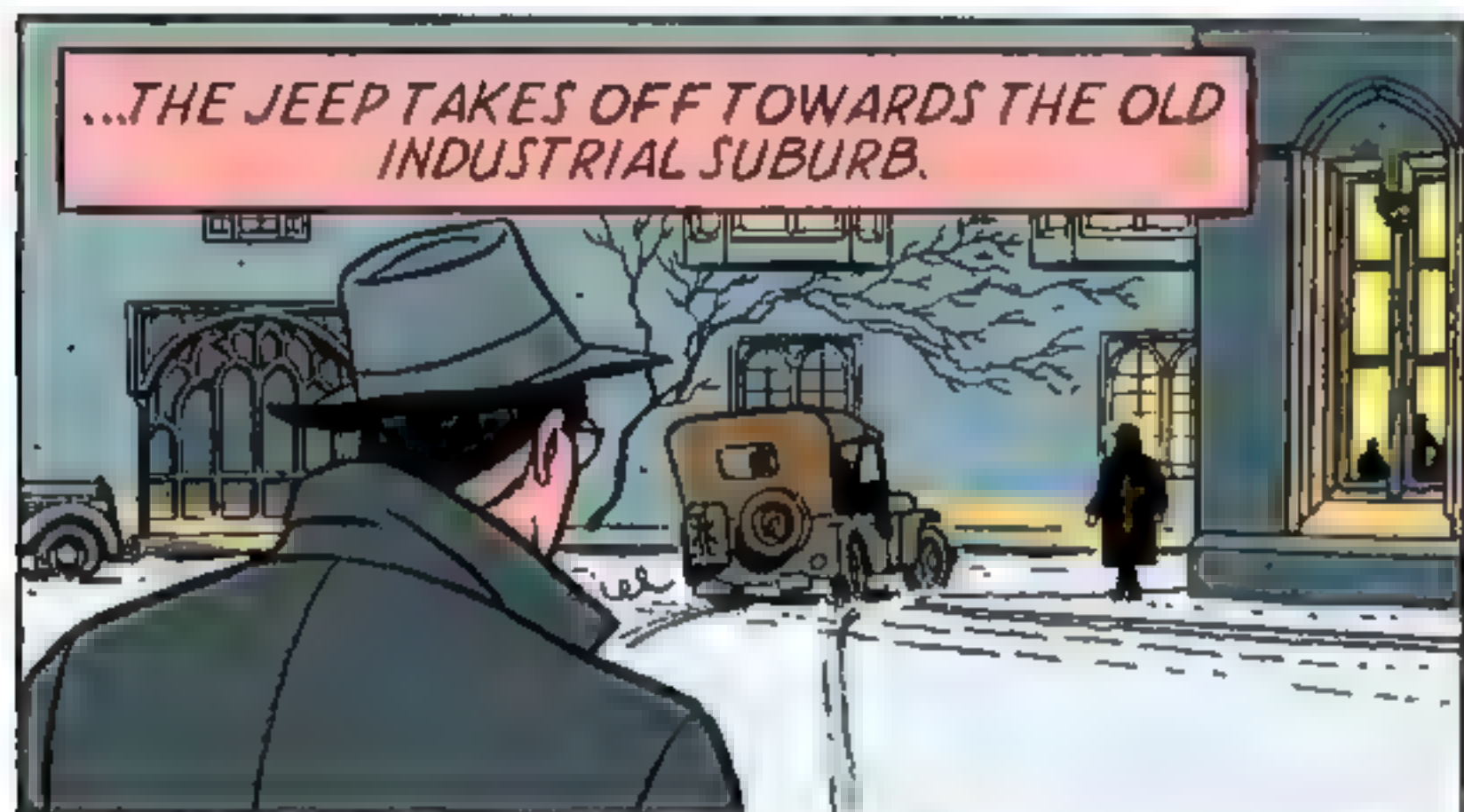


There's also Alfred Clayton, supposedly dim-witted, but who has shelf upon shelf of psychology books and reviews in his room at the museum. Not to mention his neck scar, similar to that of John Hastings' phantom roommate!











Look! I have what you wanted. And I just spoke to Alfred. He told me everything... It's over. Surrender, and free the professor.



No! Nothing is over! It's between you and me now... Throw me the pages and get on your knees, hands on your head.



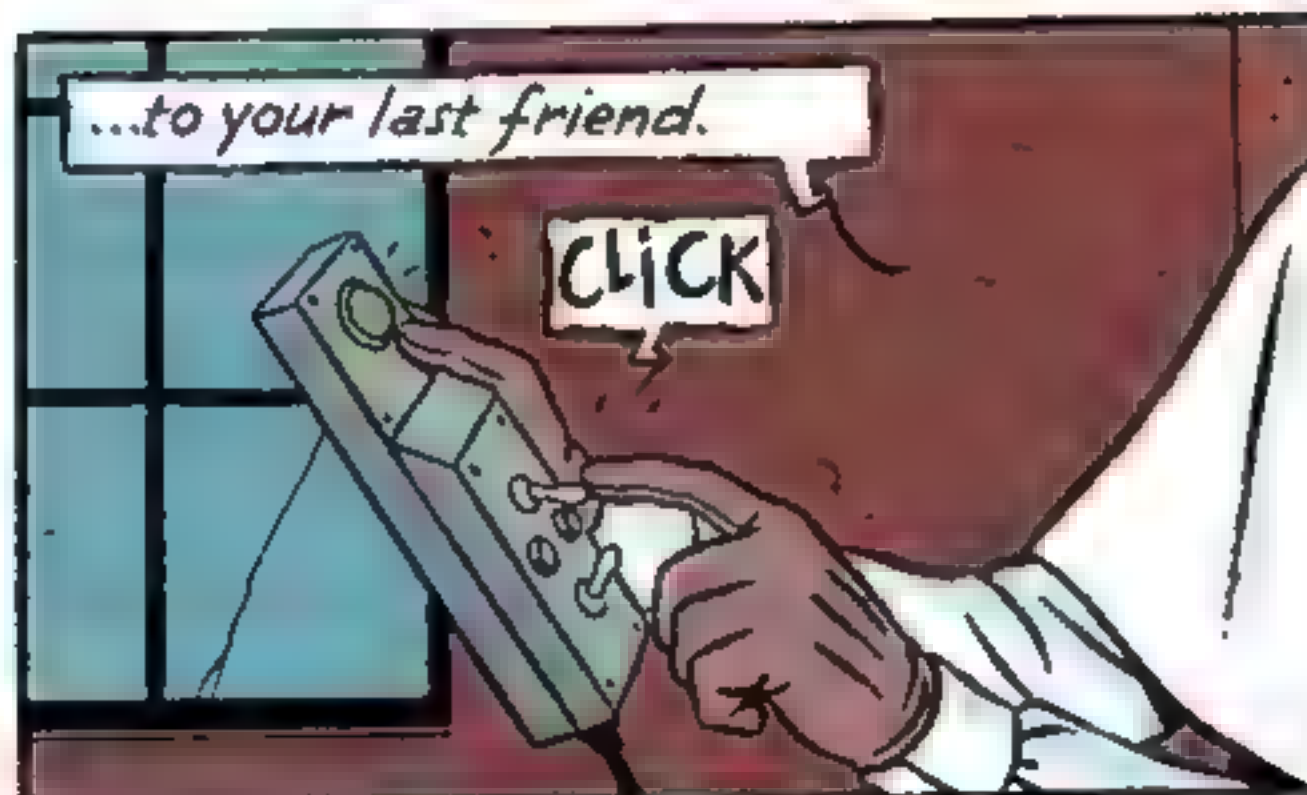
HELPLESS, BLAKE OBEYS.



At last! We have the whole manuscript!

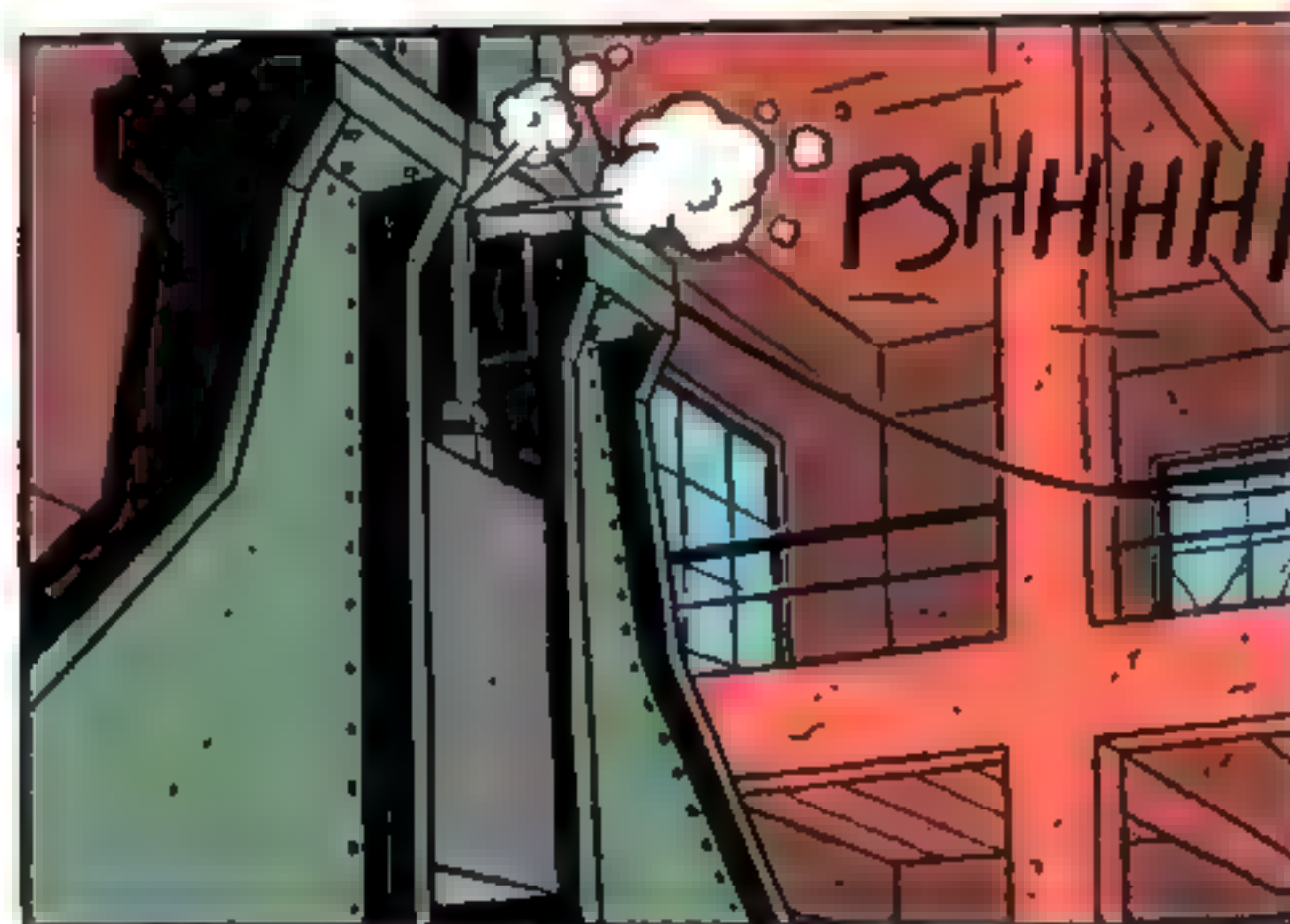


And now it's your turn, Captain! All that's left is for you to experience what an unbearable feeling of injustice is. It's time to say goodbye...



...to your last friend.

CLICK



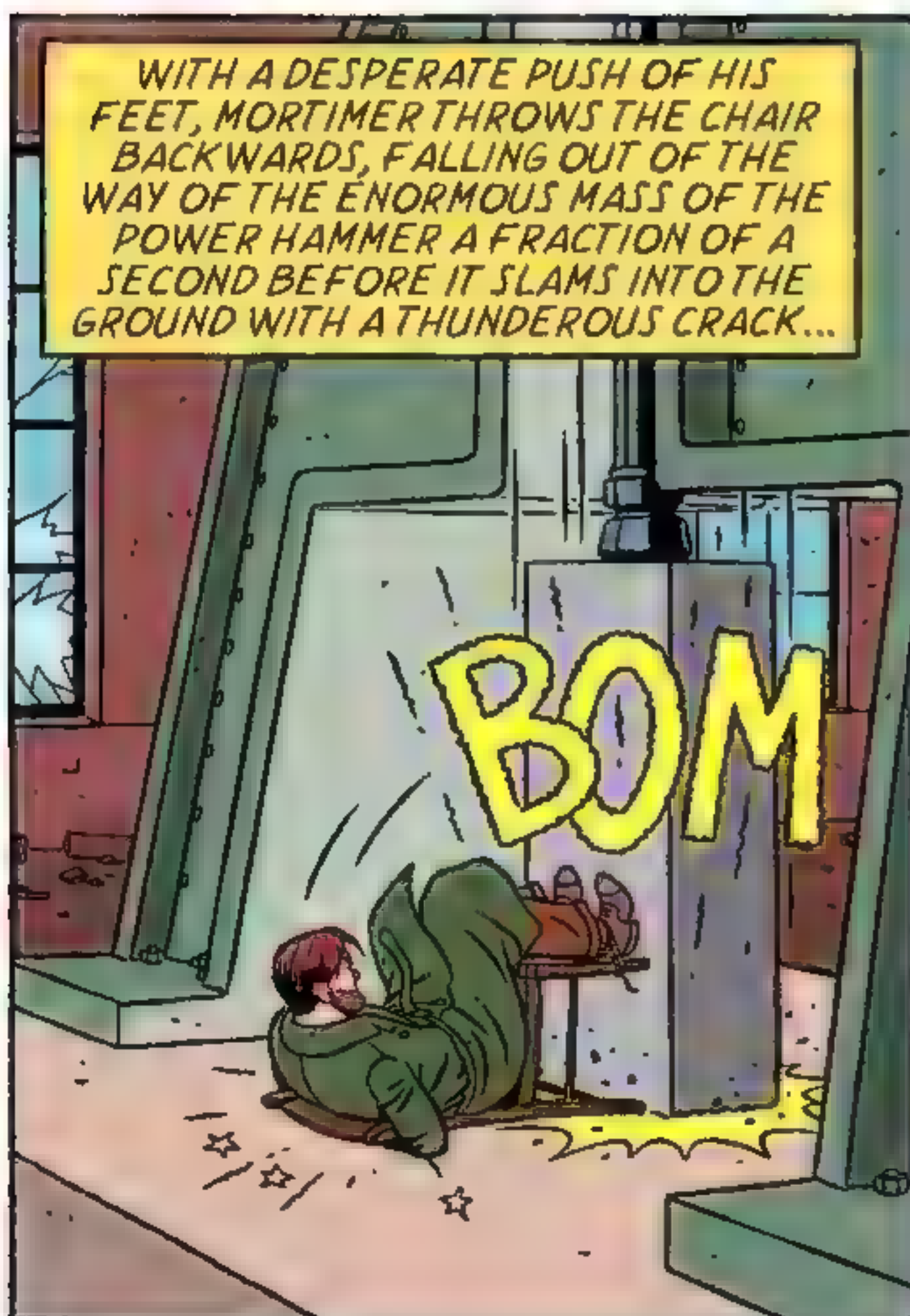
PSHHHHH



PSHHHHH

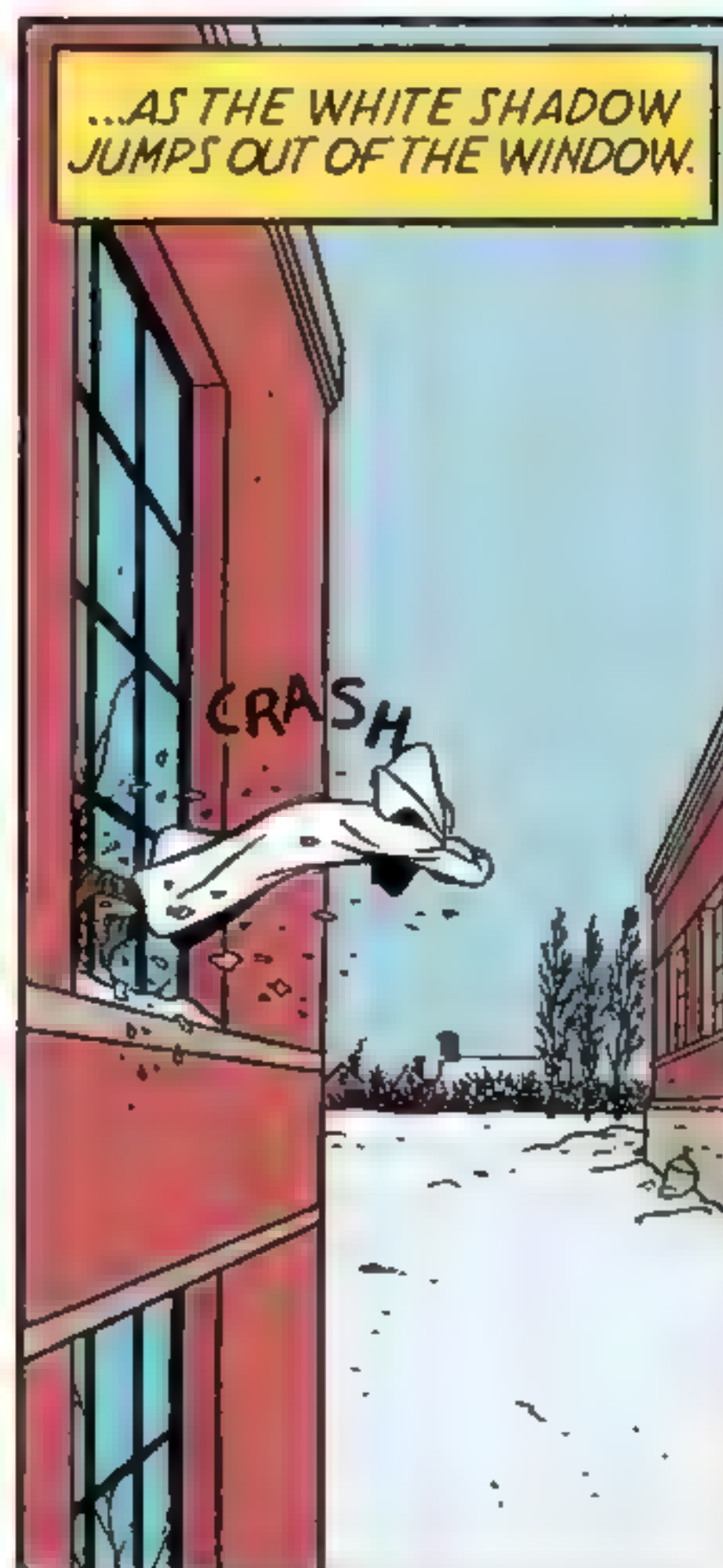


Good Lord! Philip!



WITH A DESPERATE PUSH OF HIS FEET, MORTIMER THROWS THE CHAIR BACKWARDS, FALLING OUT OF THE WAY OF THE ENORMOUS MASS OF THE POWER HAMMER A FRACTION OF A SECOND BEFORE IT SLAMS INTO THE GROUND WITH A THUNDEROUS CRACK...

BOM



...AS THE WHITE SHADOW JUMPS OUT OF THE WINDOW.

CRASH

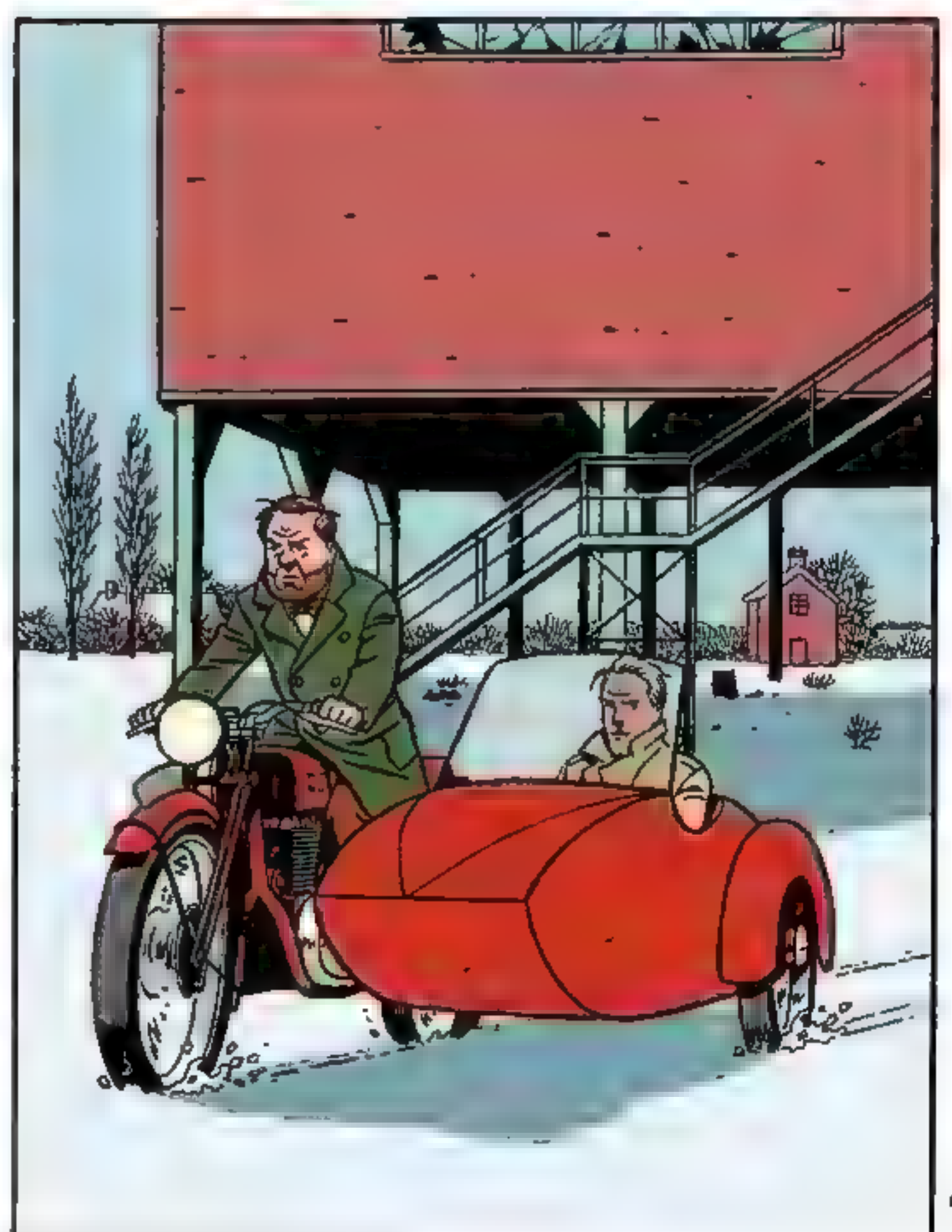
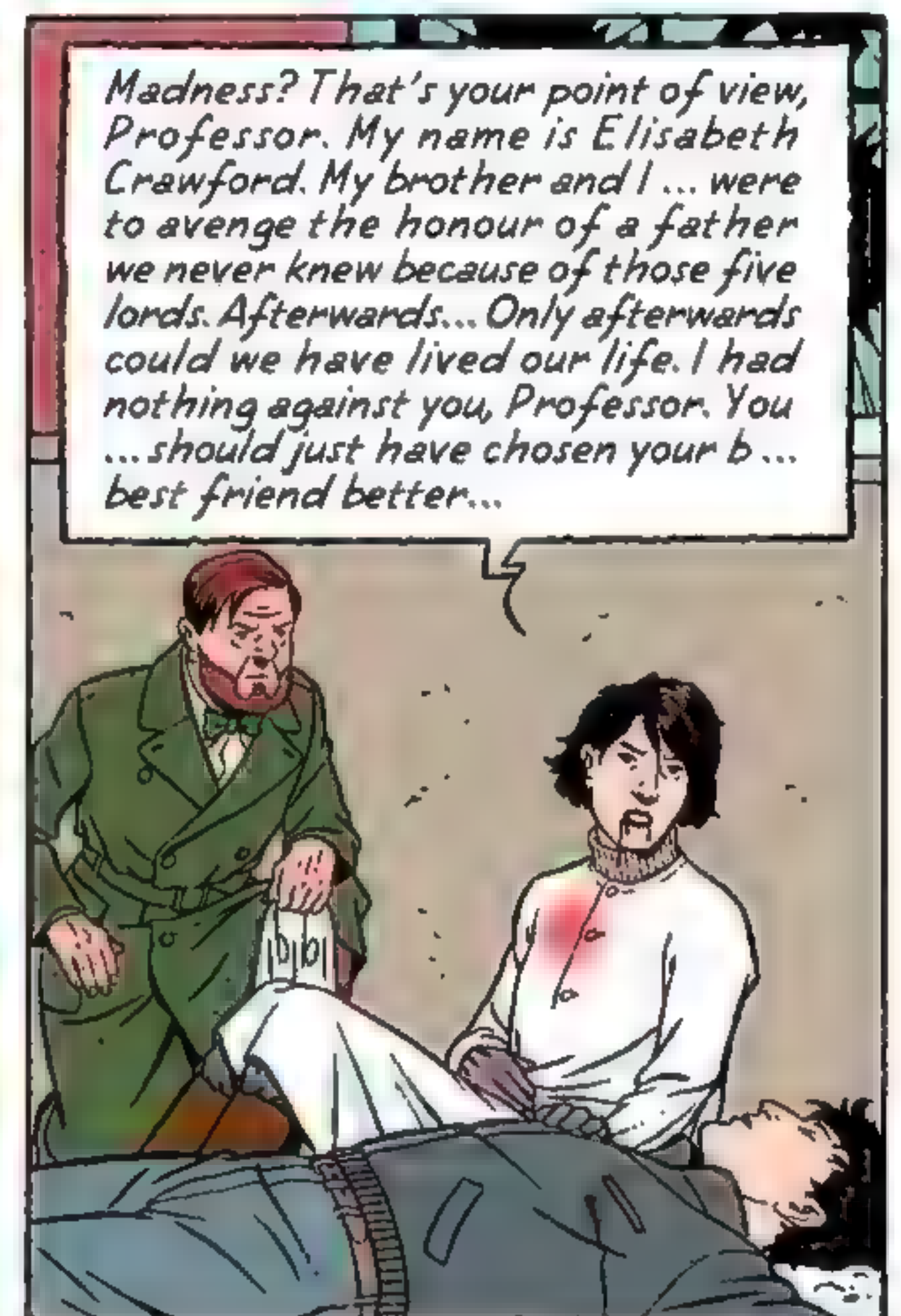
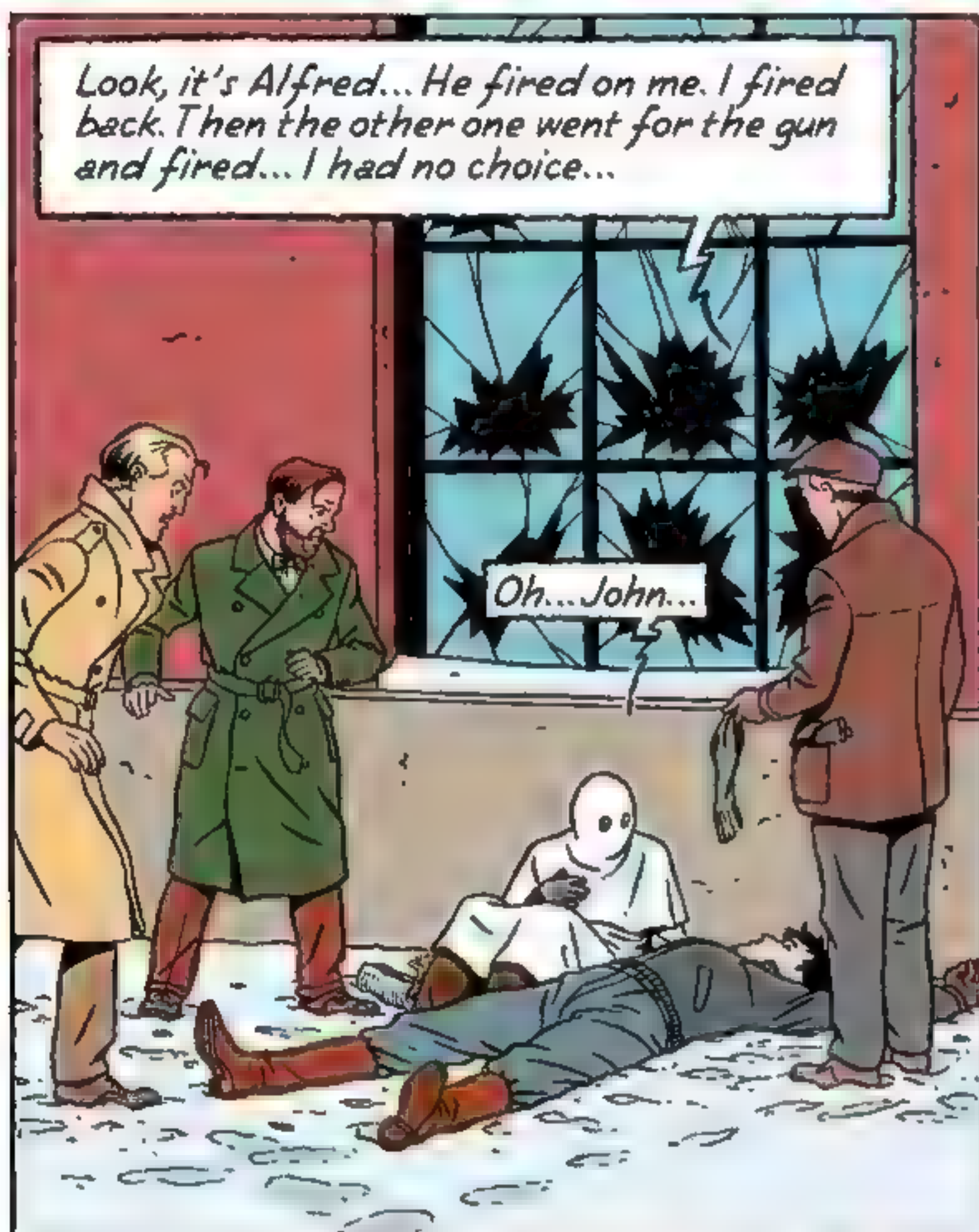
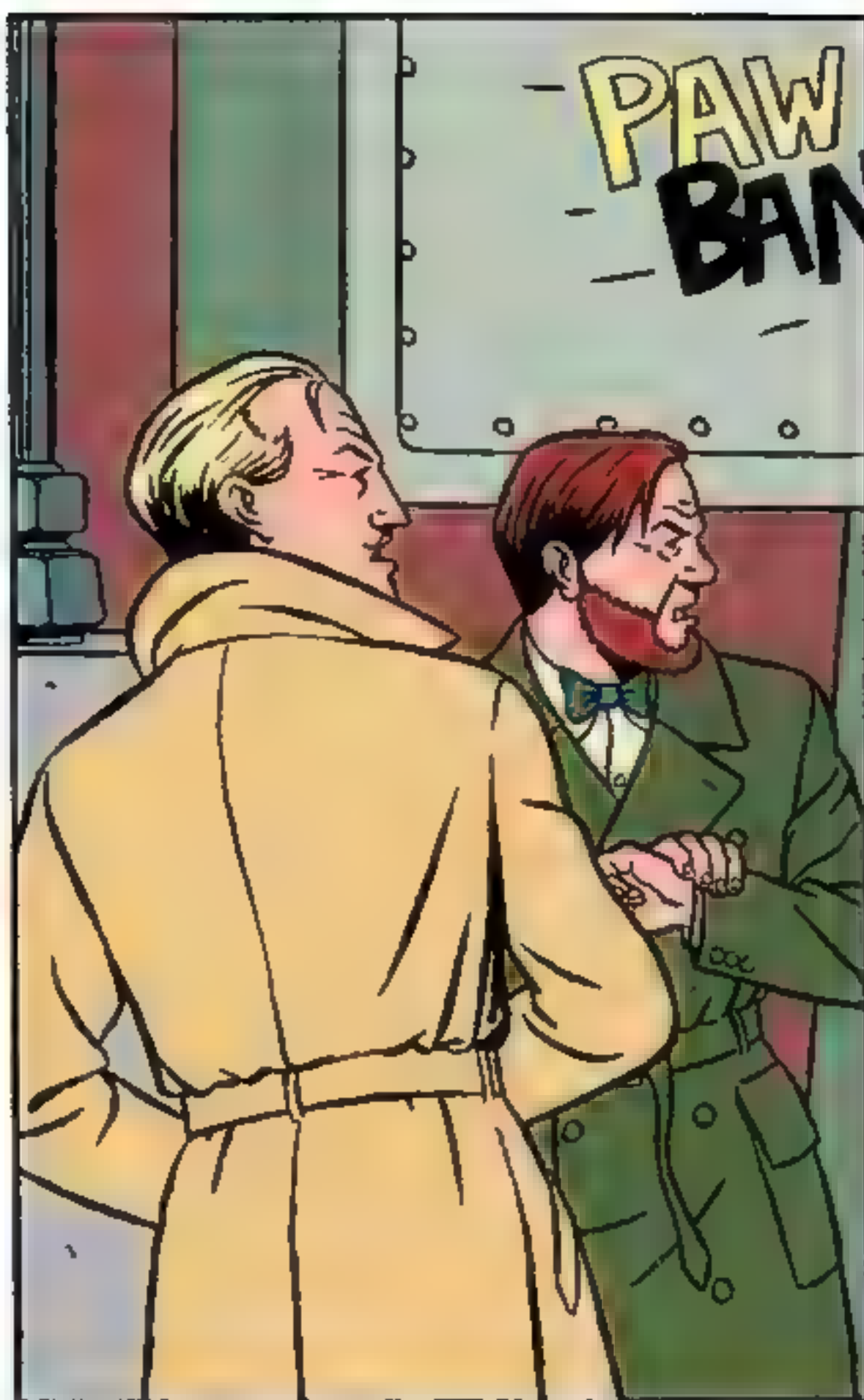
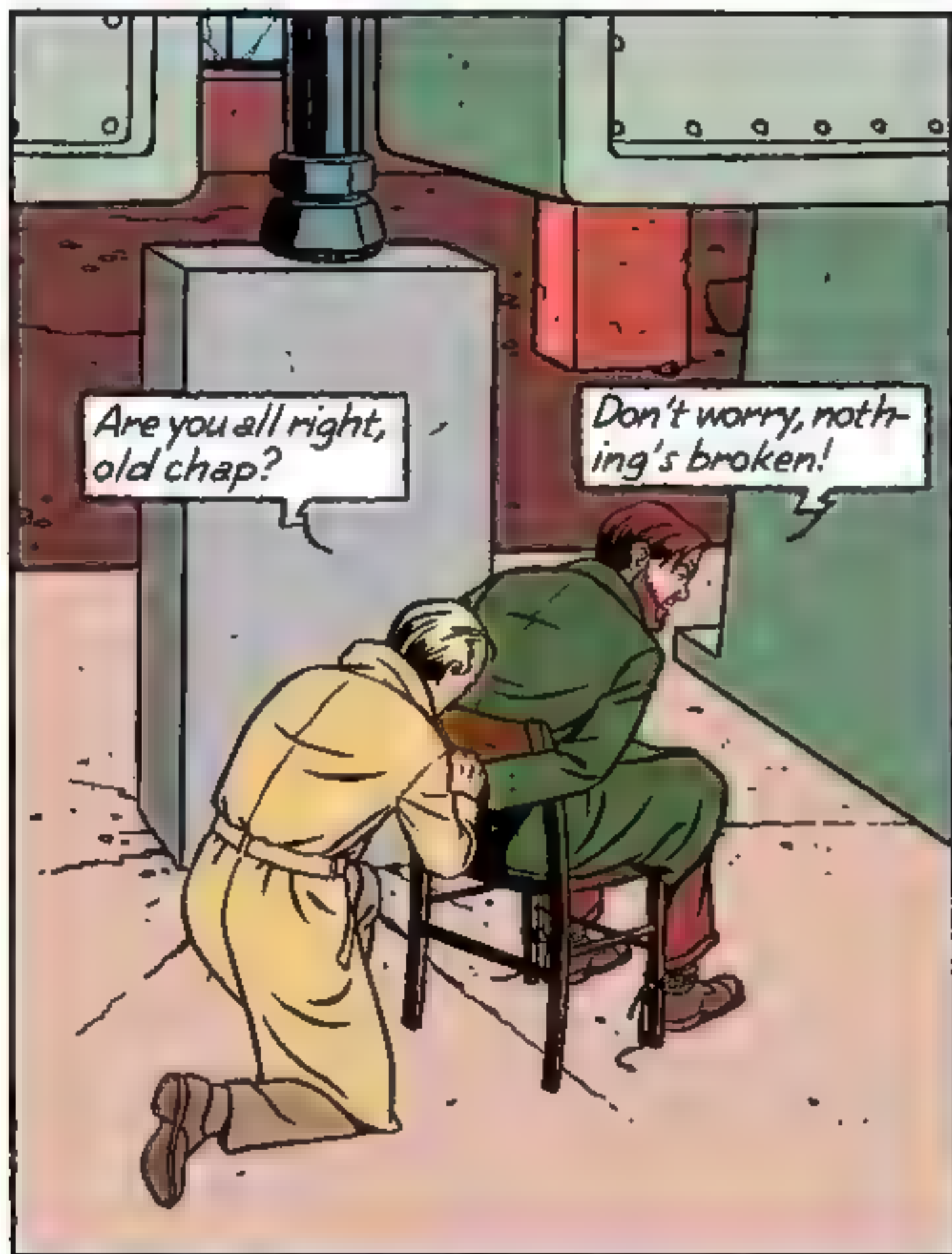


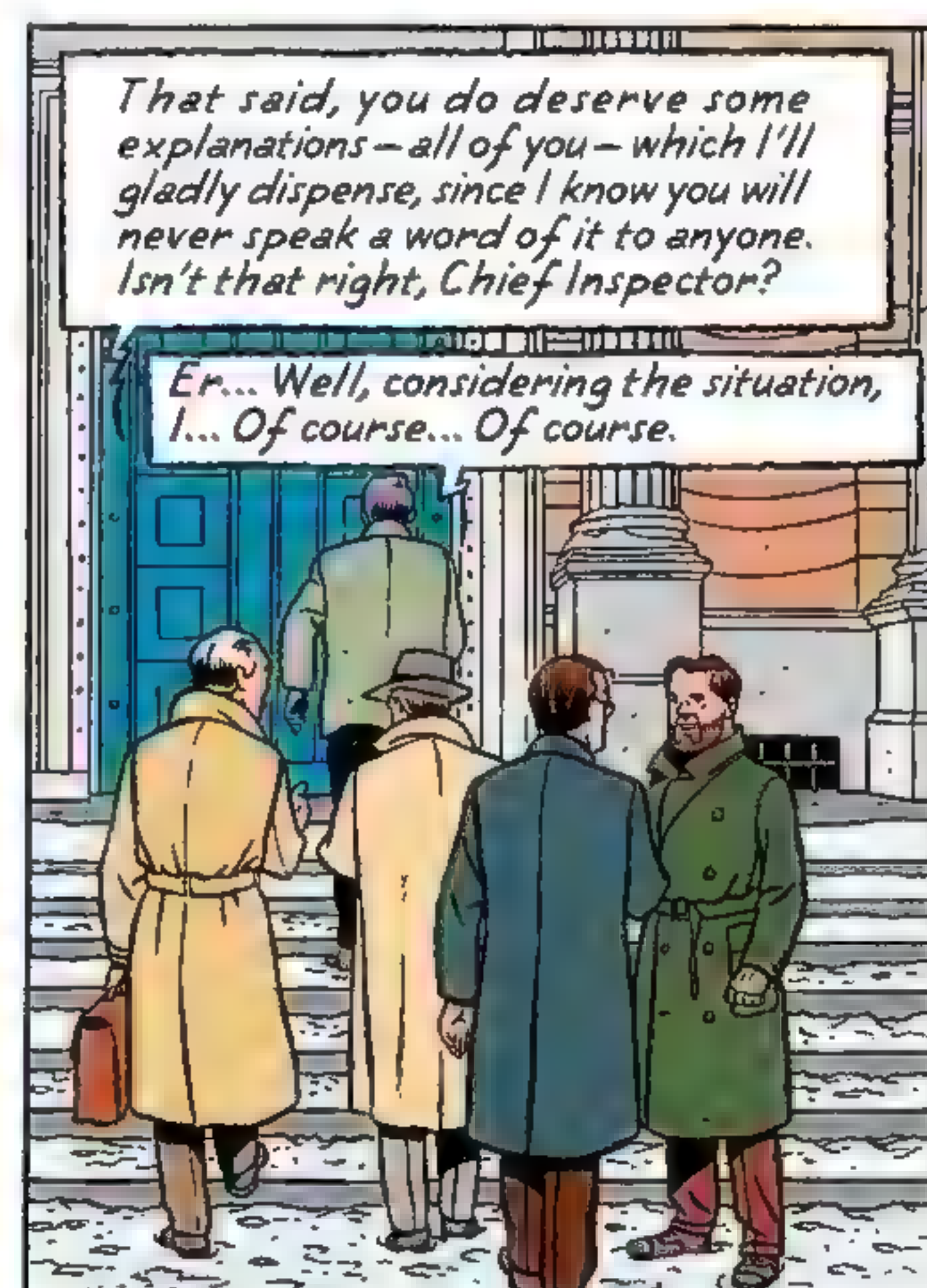
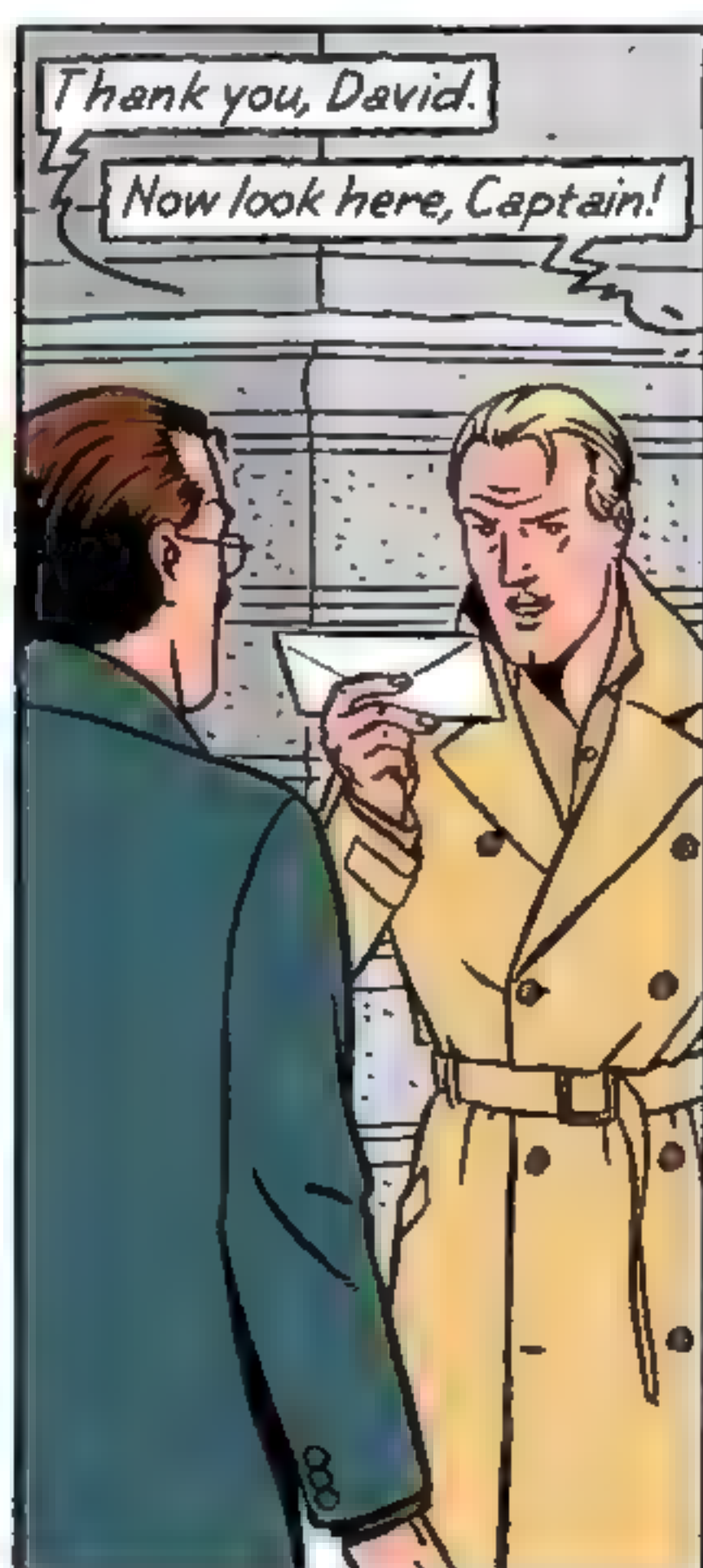
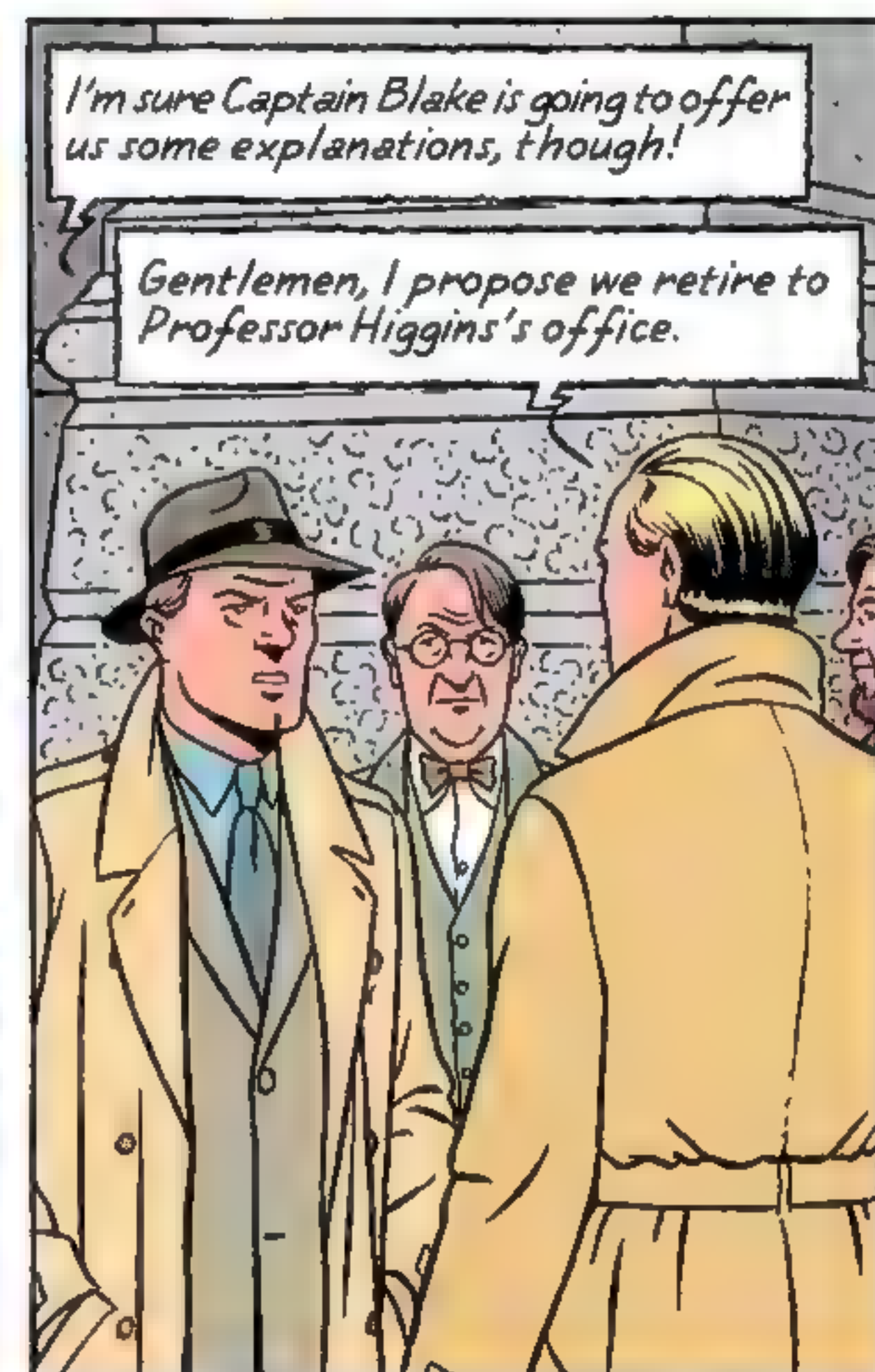
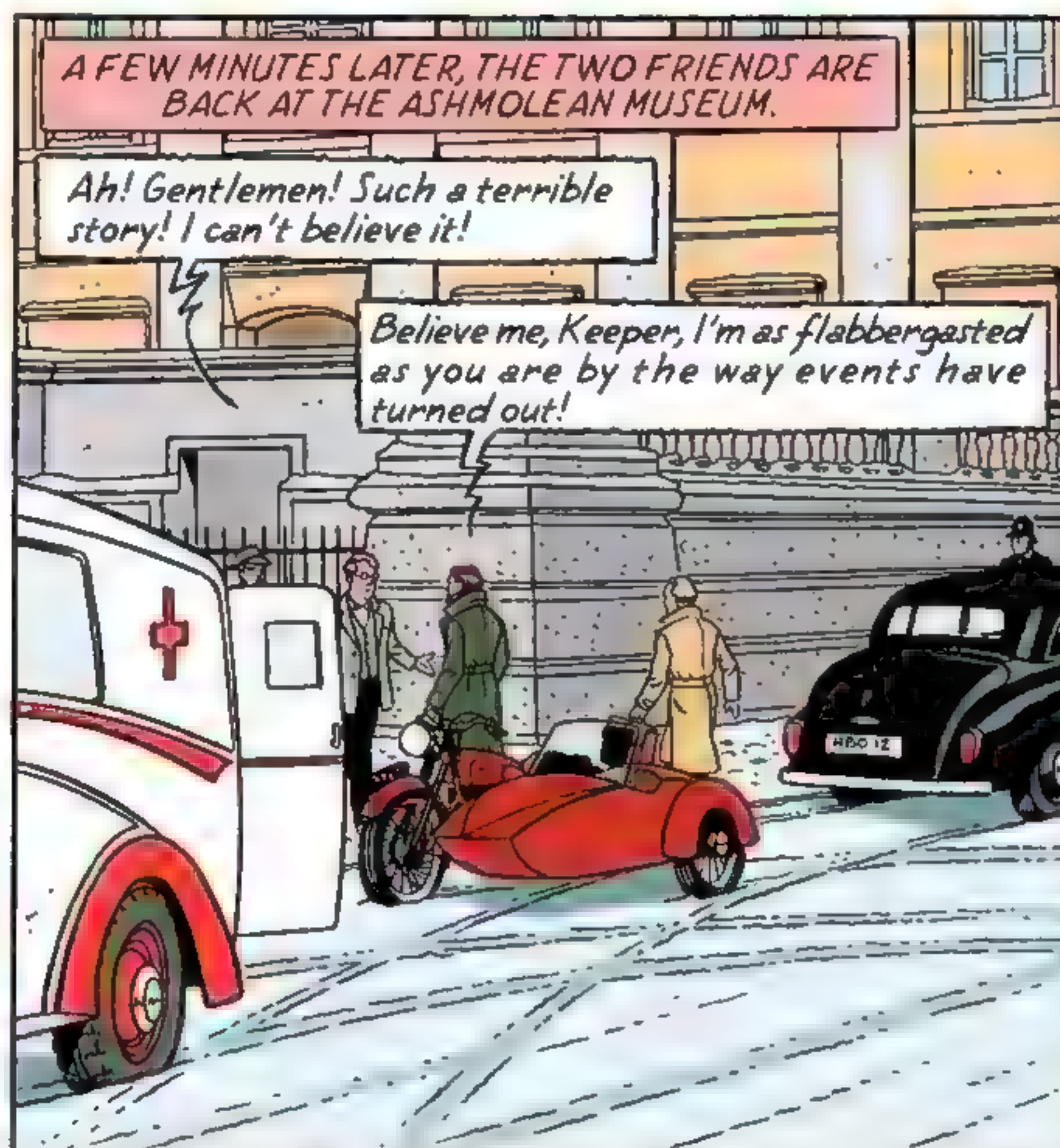
TWO POWERFUL ARMS ARE WAITING AT THE FOOT OF THE WALL.

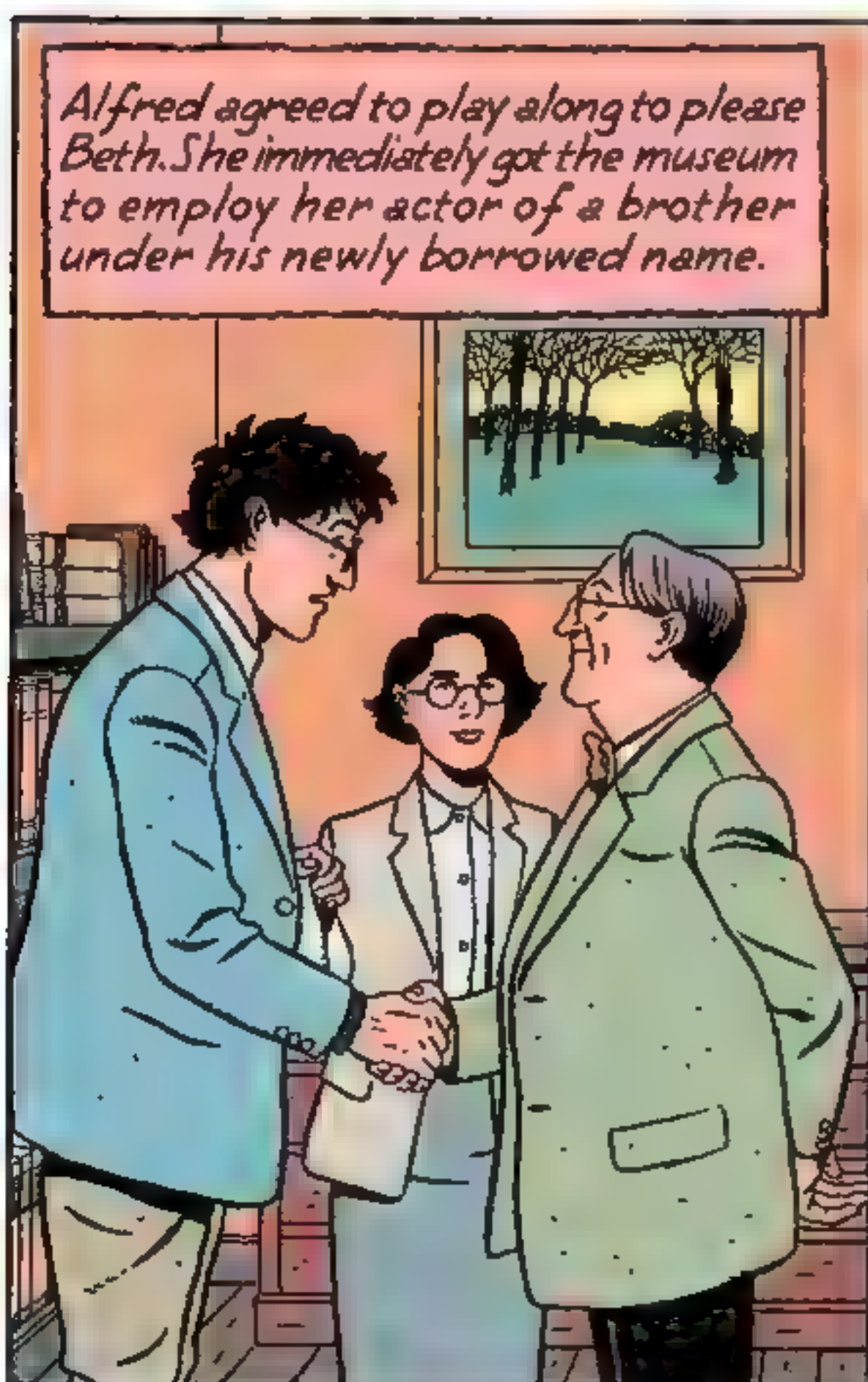
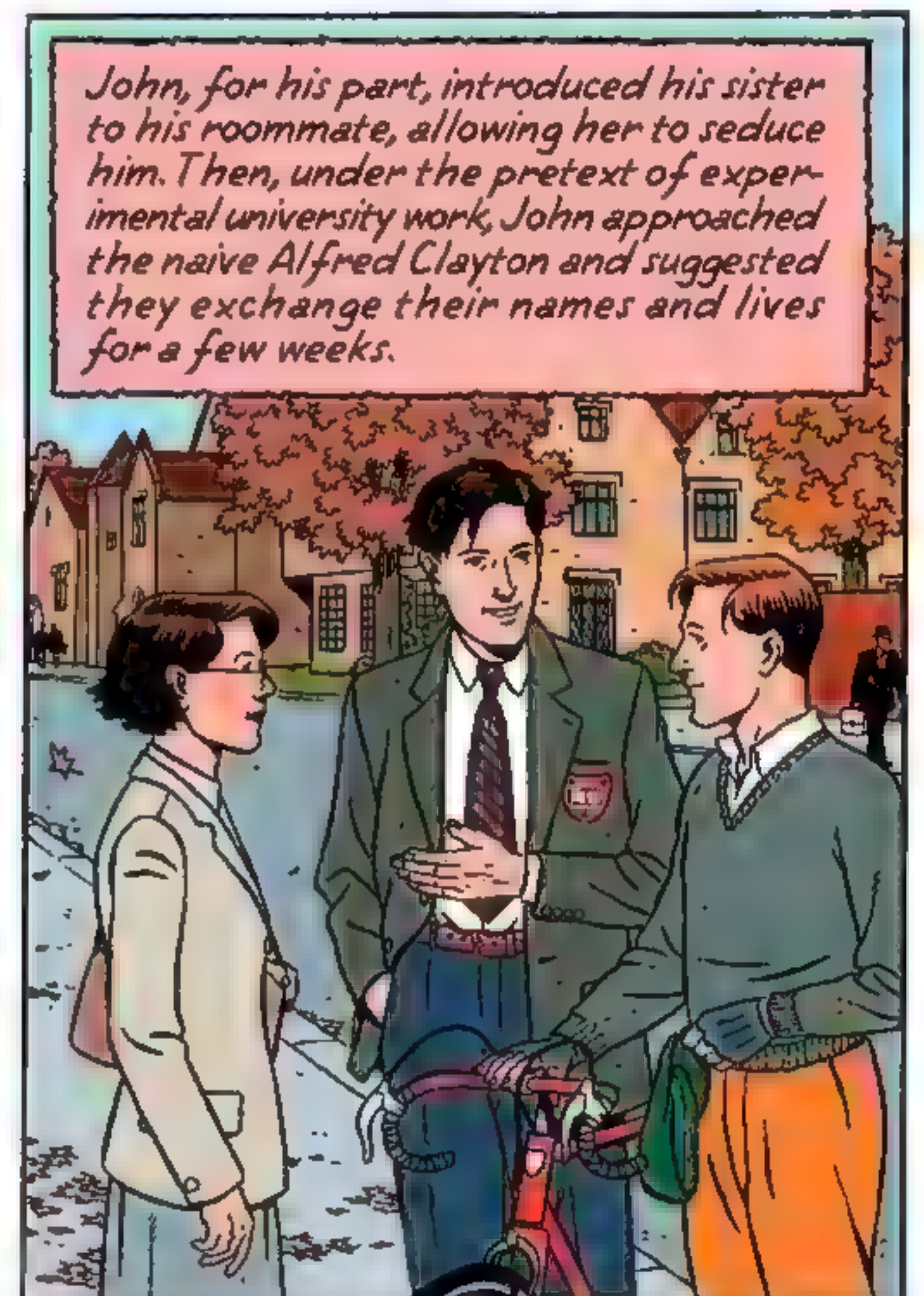
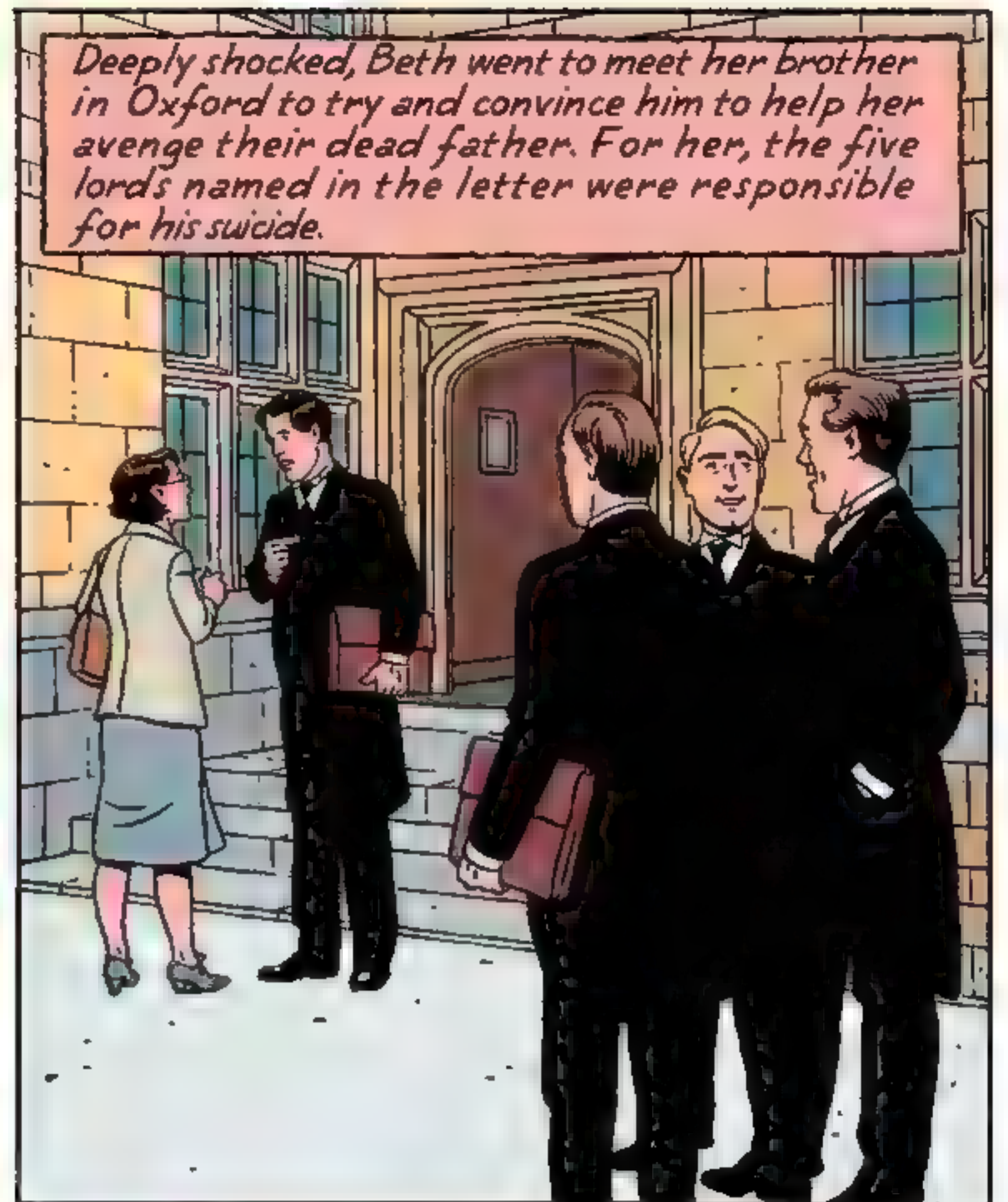
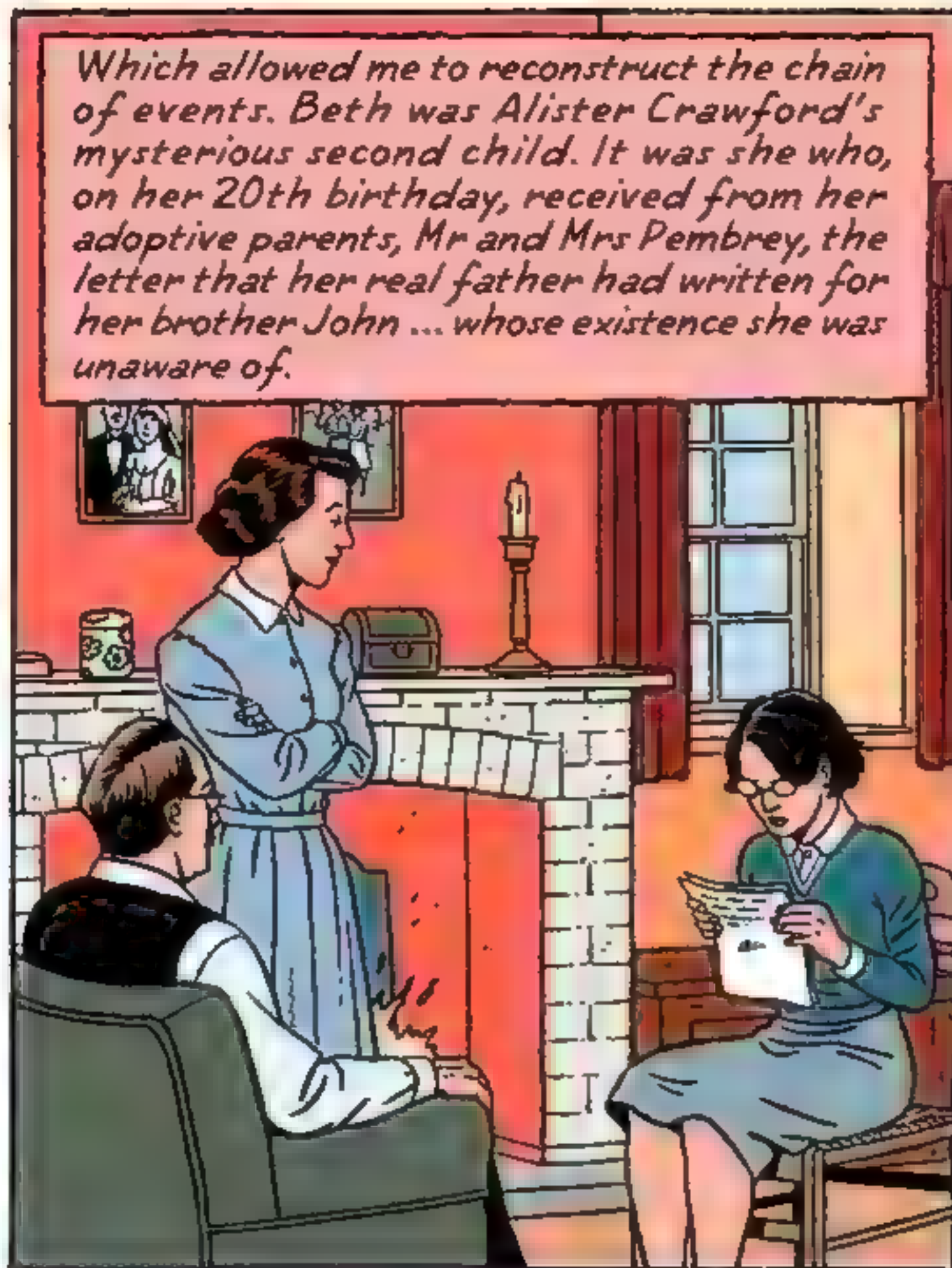


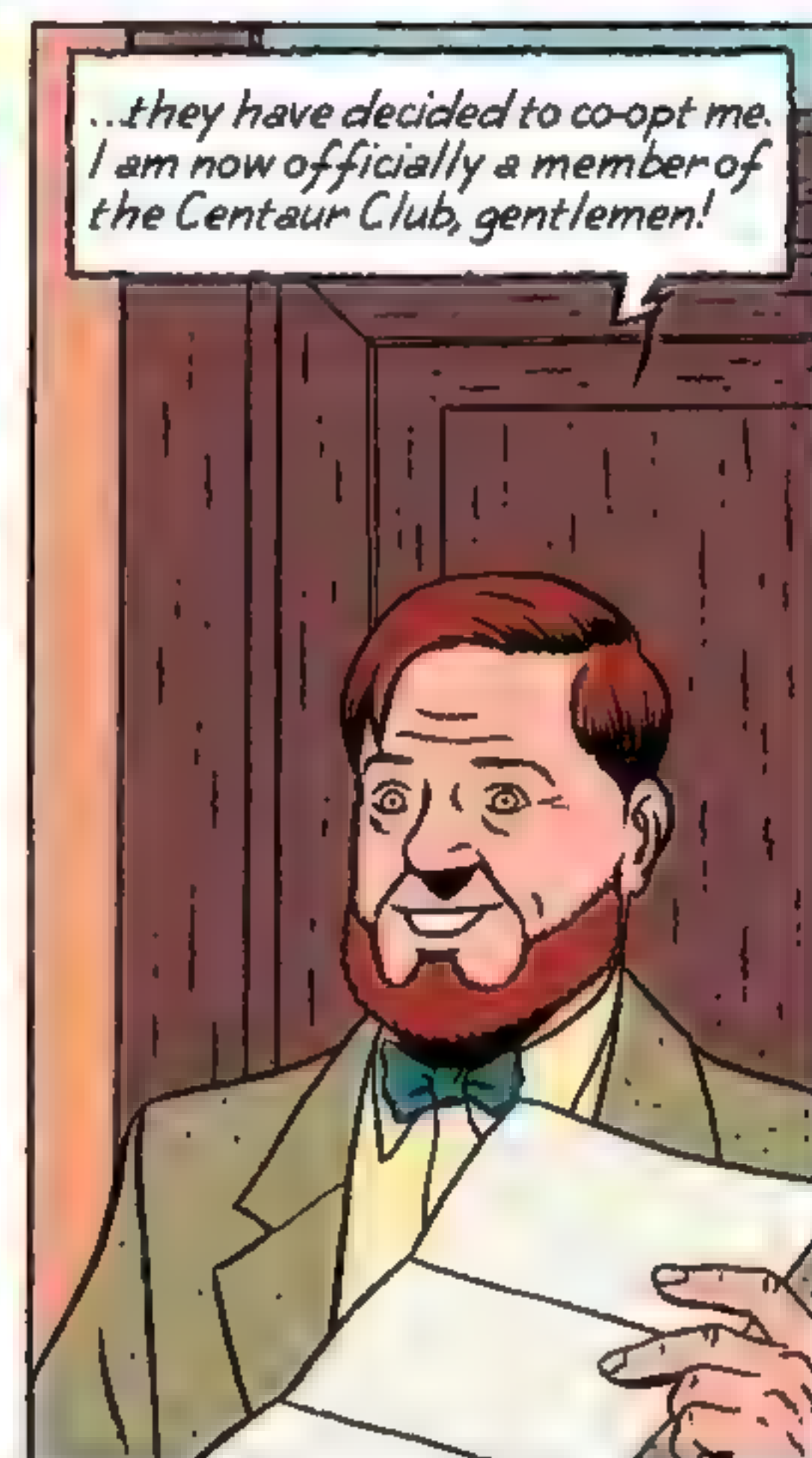
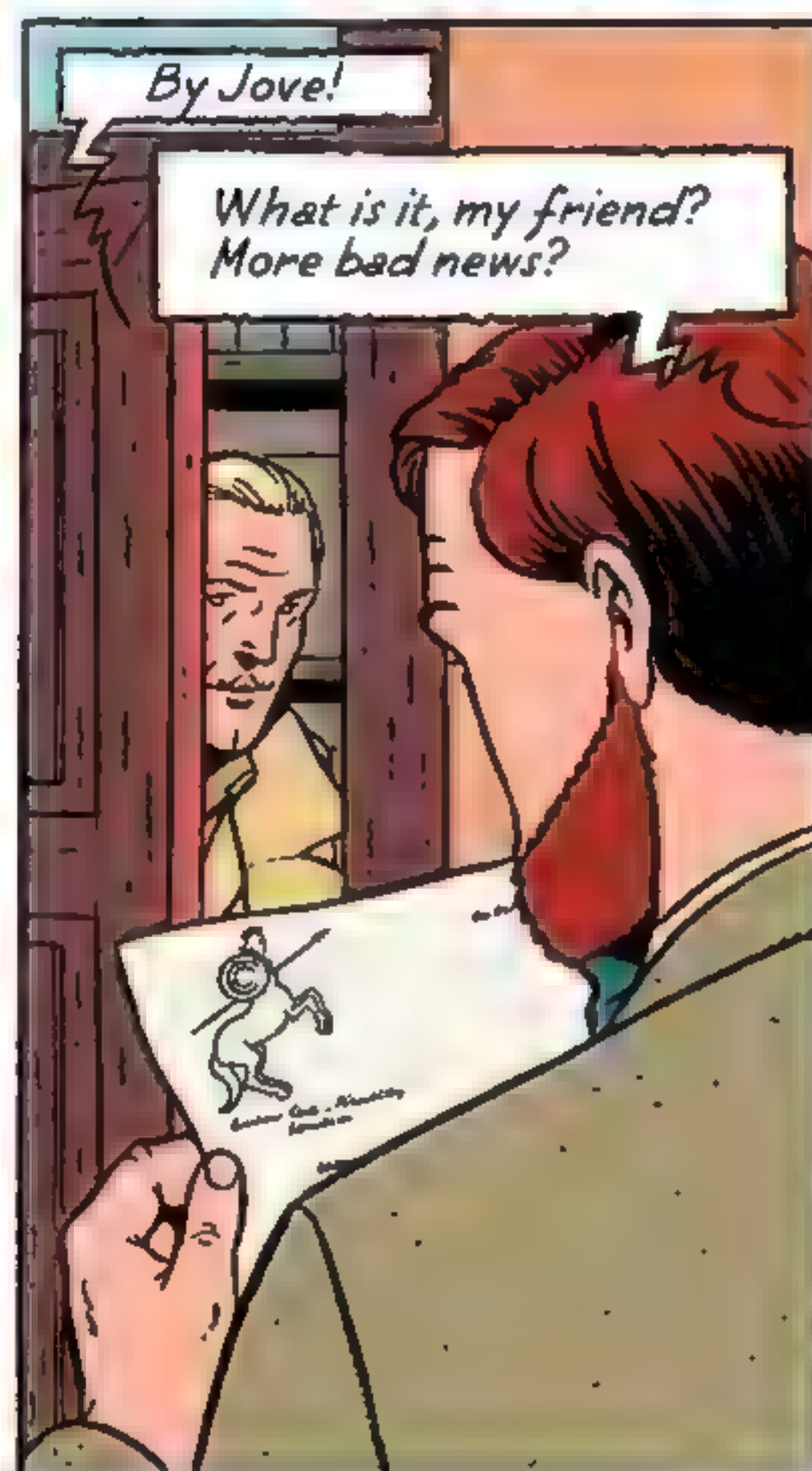
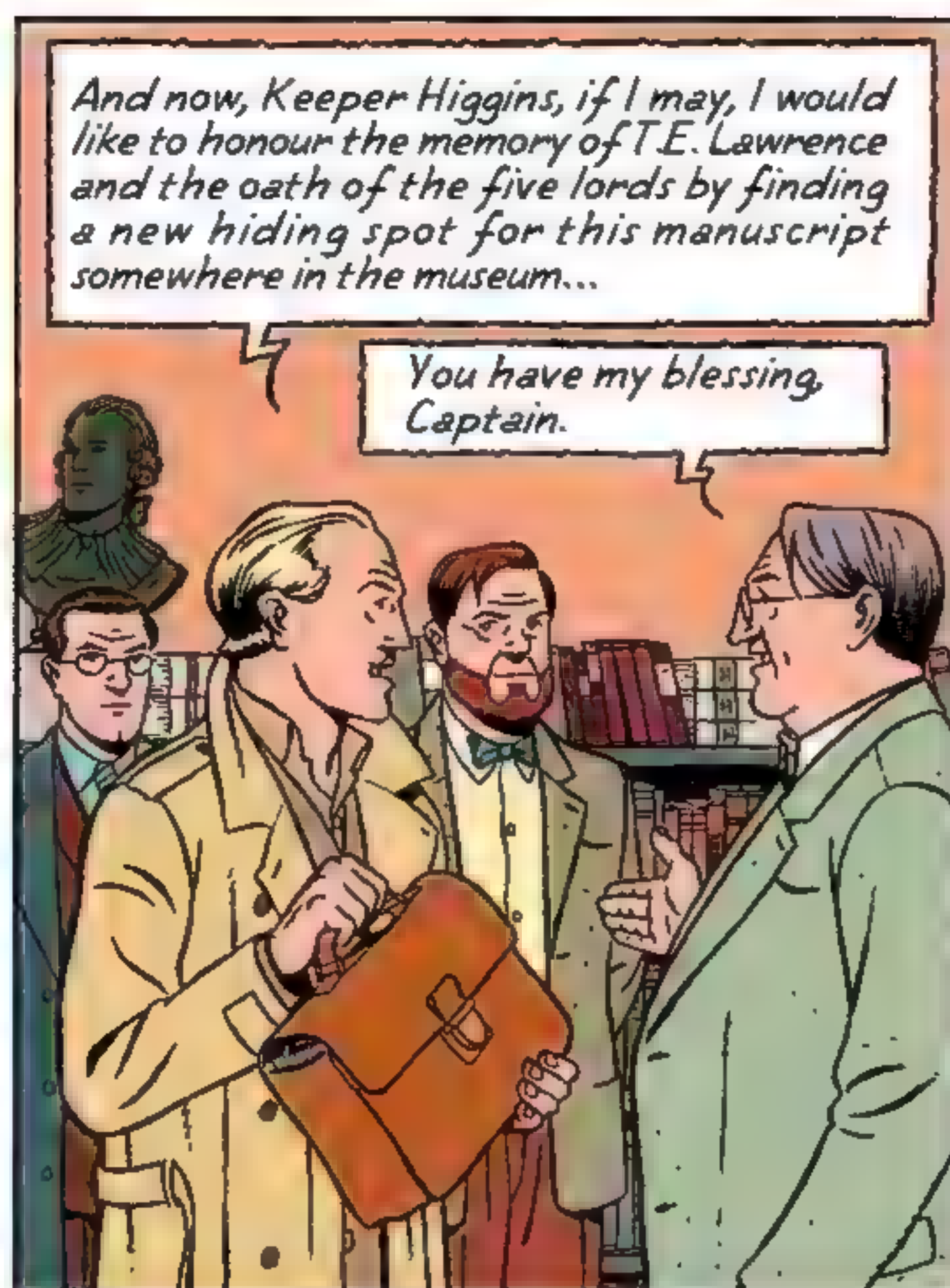
Do try to run, gentlemen, please!

?!





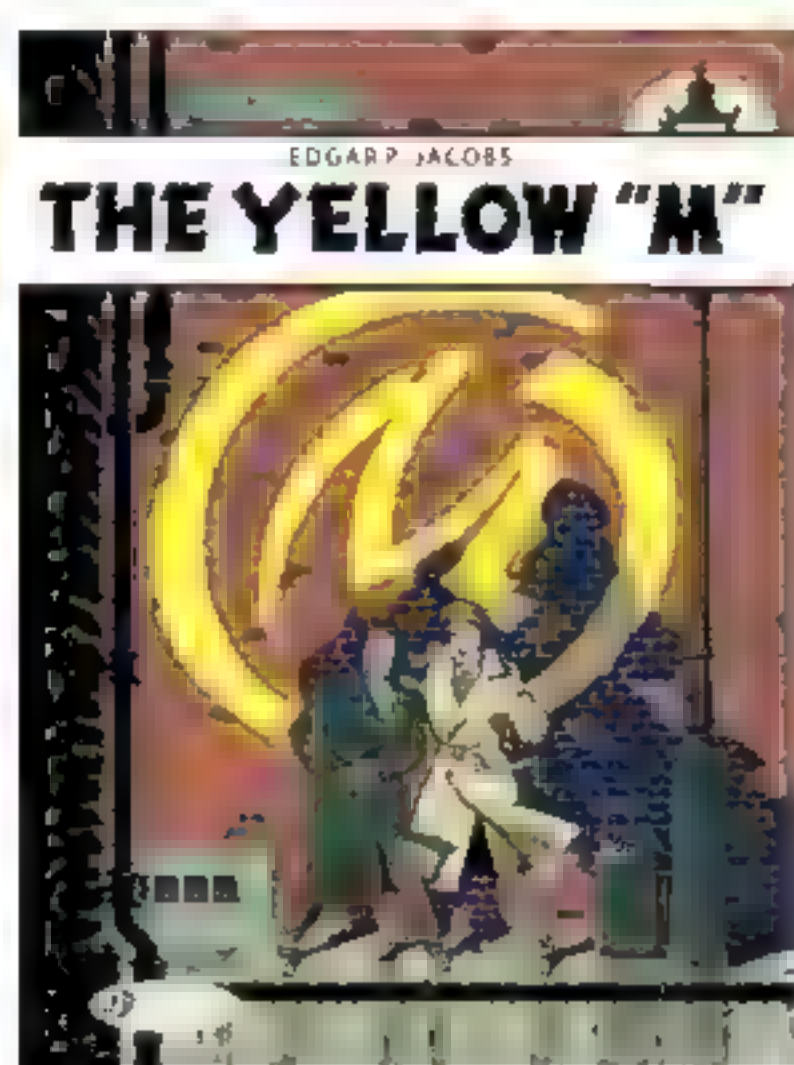




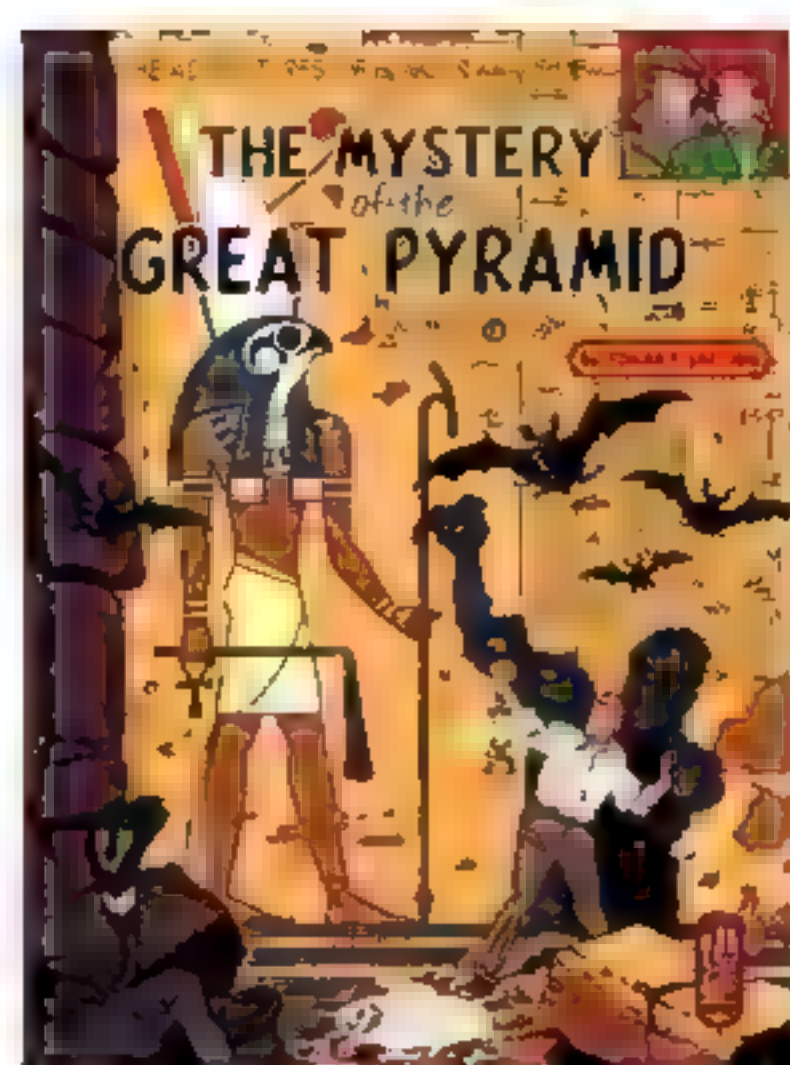
**THE
END**
Yves Senne
Julland
M. de Mille



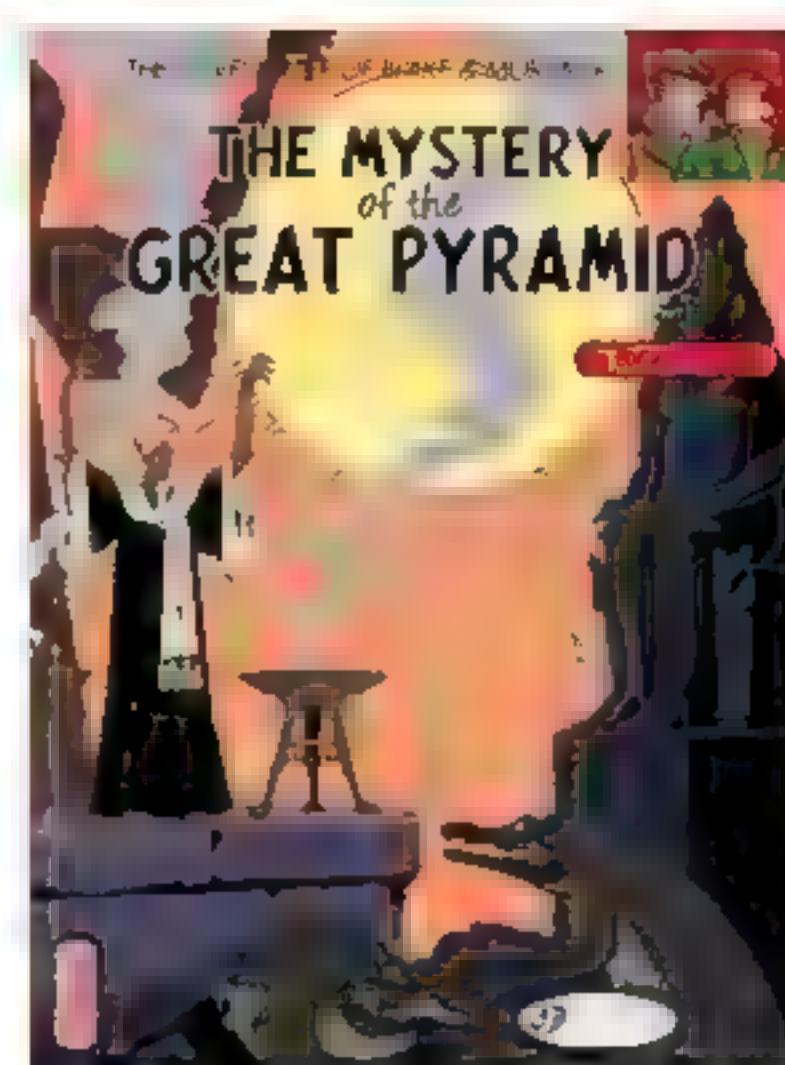
THE ADVENTURES OF BLAKE & MORTIMER



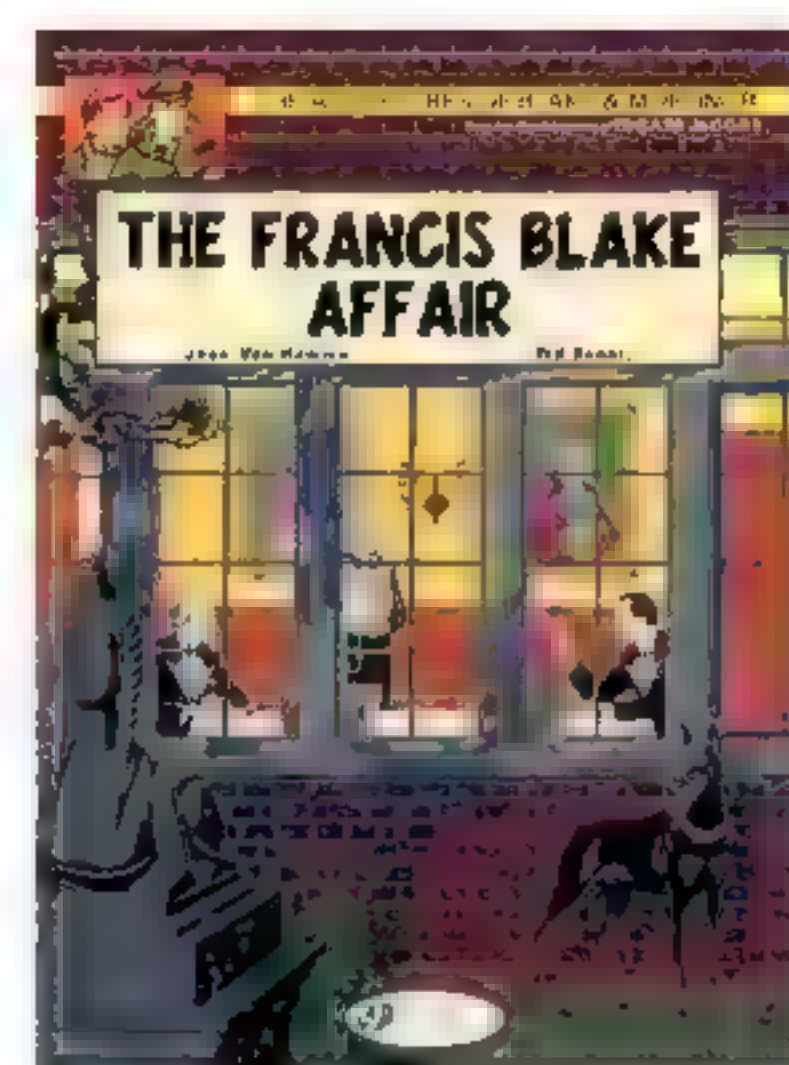
1-The Yellow "M"
EDGAR P. JACOBS



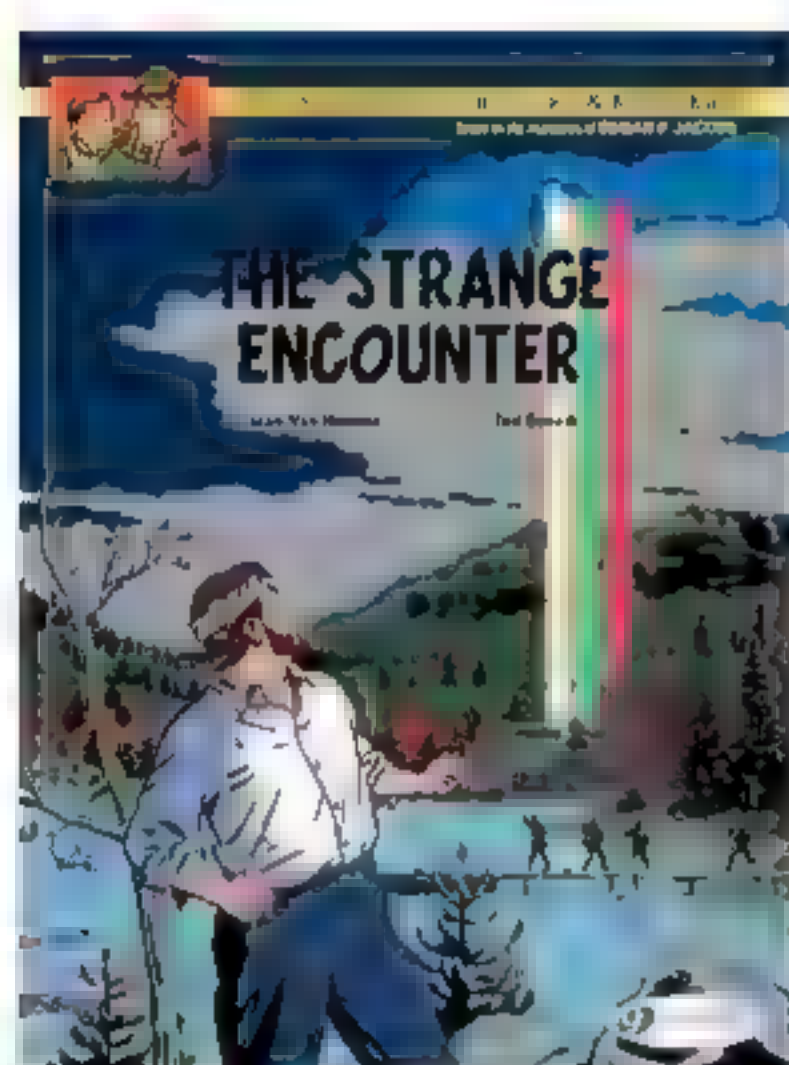
2-The Mystery of the Great Pyramid Part 1
EDGAR P. JACOBS



3-The Mystery of the Great Pyramid Part 2
EDGAR P. JACOBS



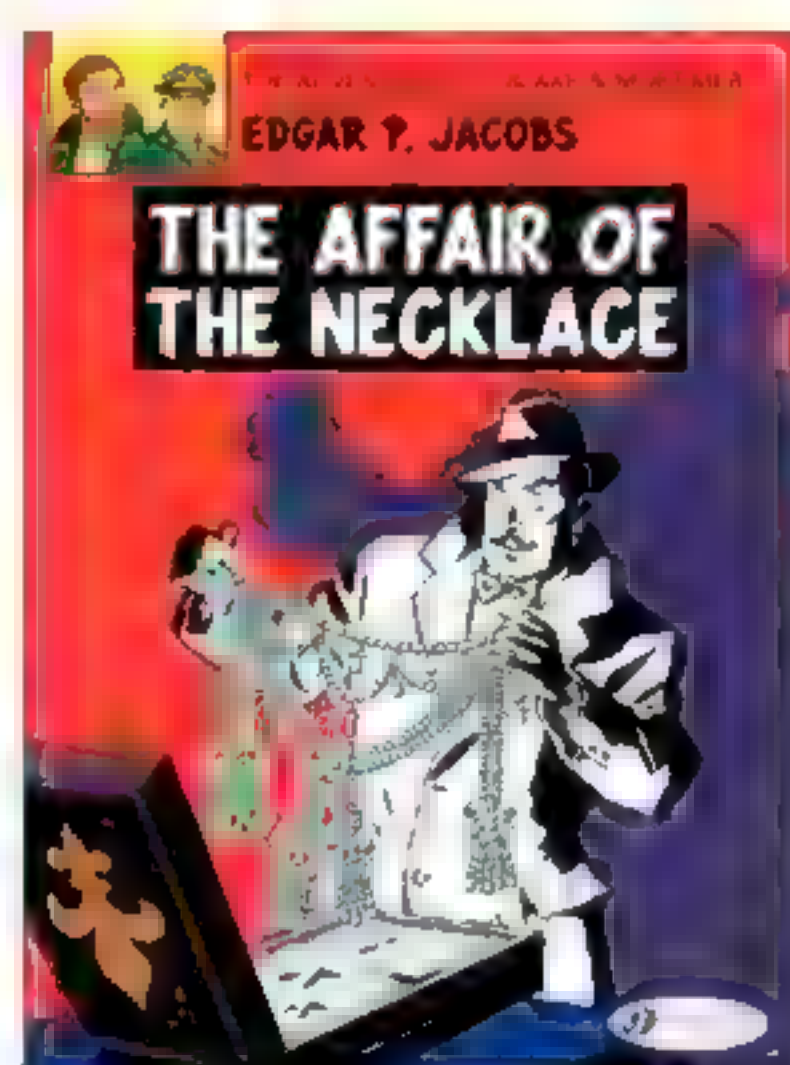
4-The Francis Blake Affair
VAN HAMME - BENOIT



5-The Strange Encounter
VAN HAMME - BENOIT



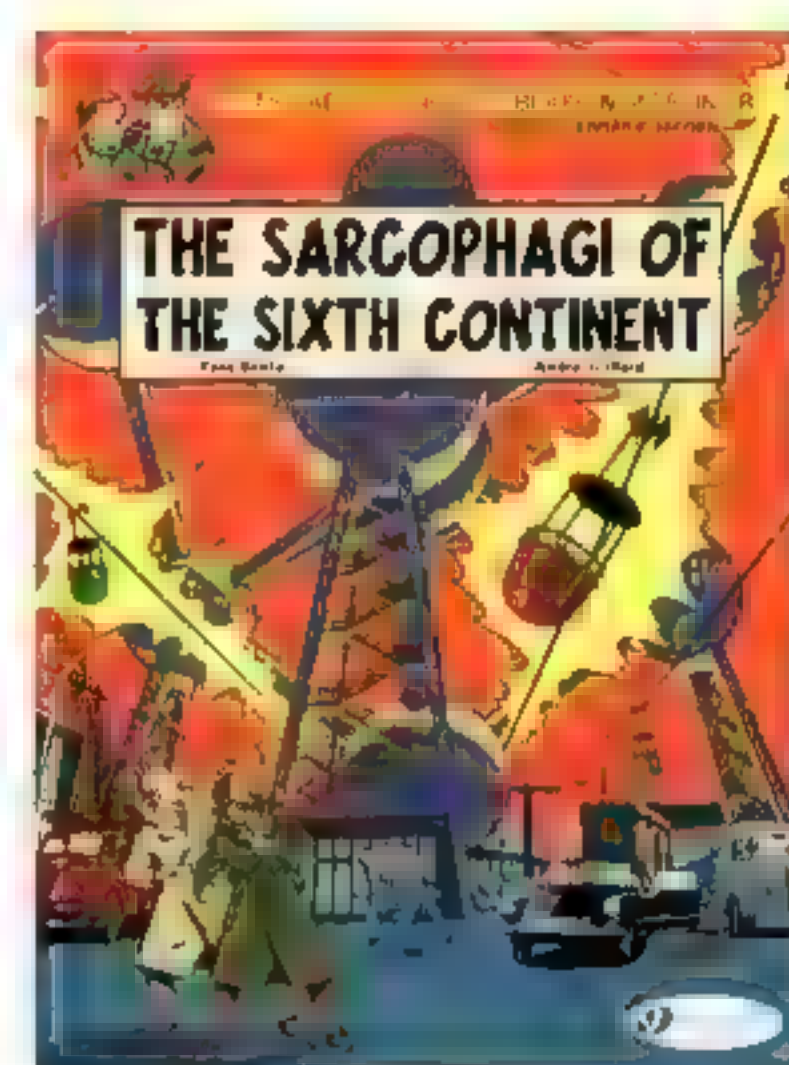
6-S.O.S. Meteors
EDGAR P. JACOBS



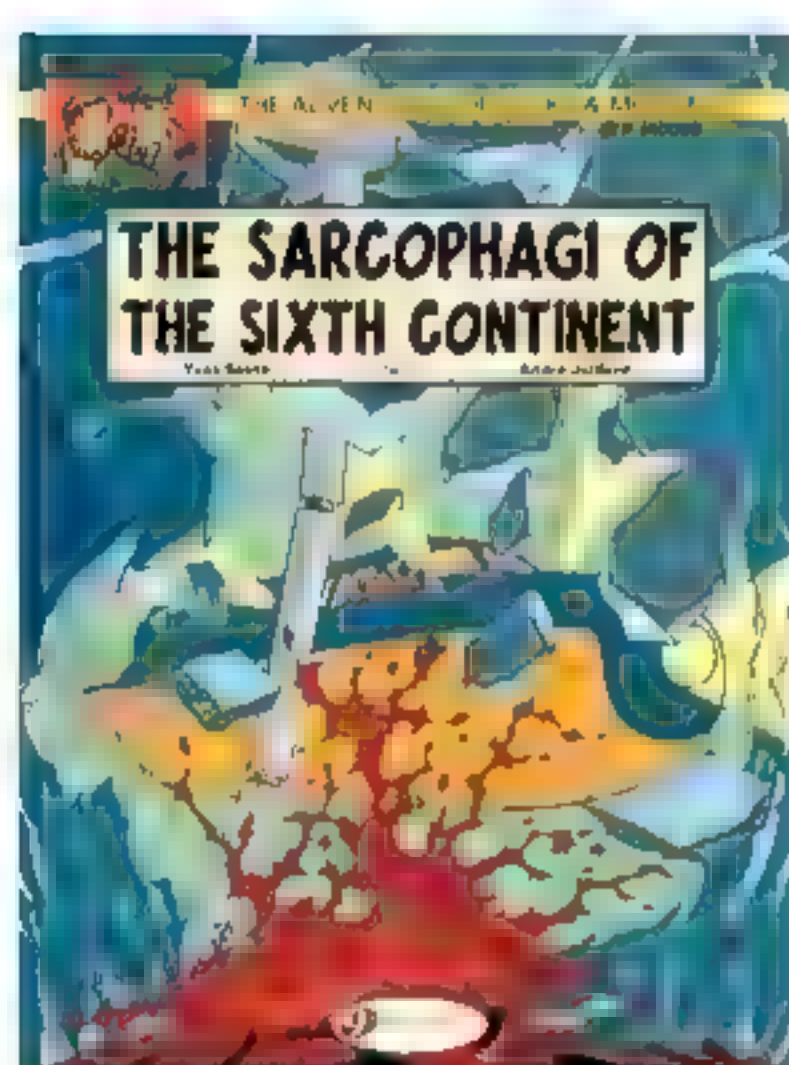
7-The Affair of the Necklace
EDGAR P. JACOBS



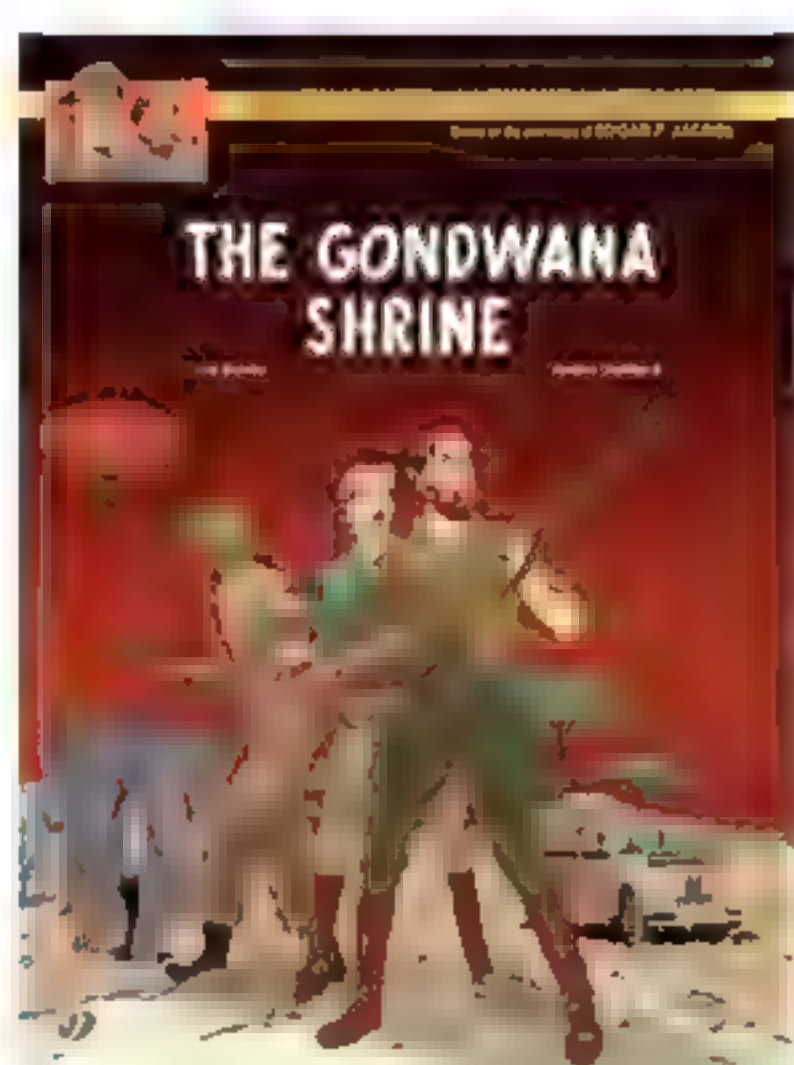
8-The Voronov Plot
SENTE - JUILLARD



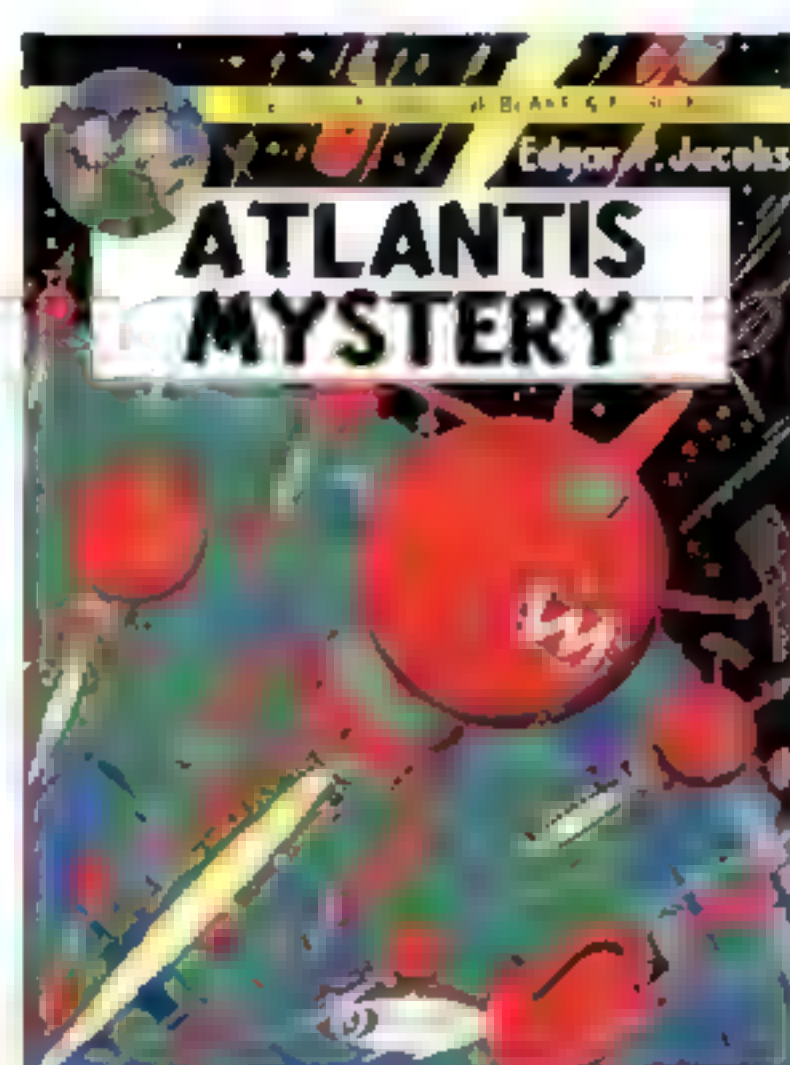
9-The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent Part 1
SENTE - JUILLARD



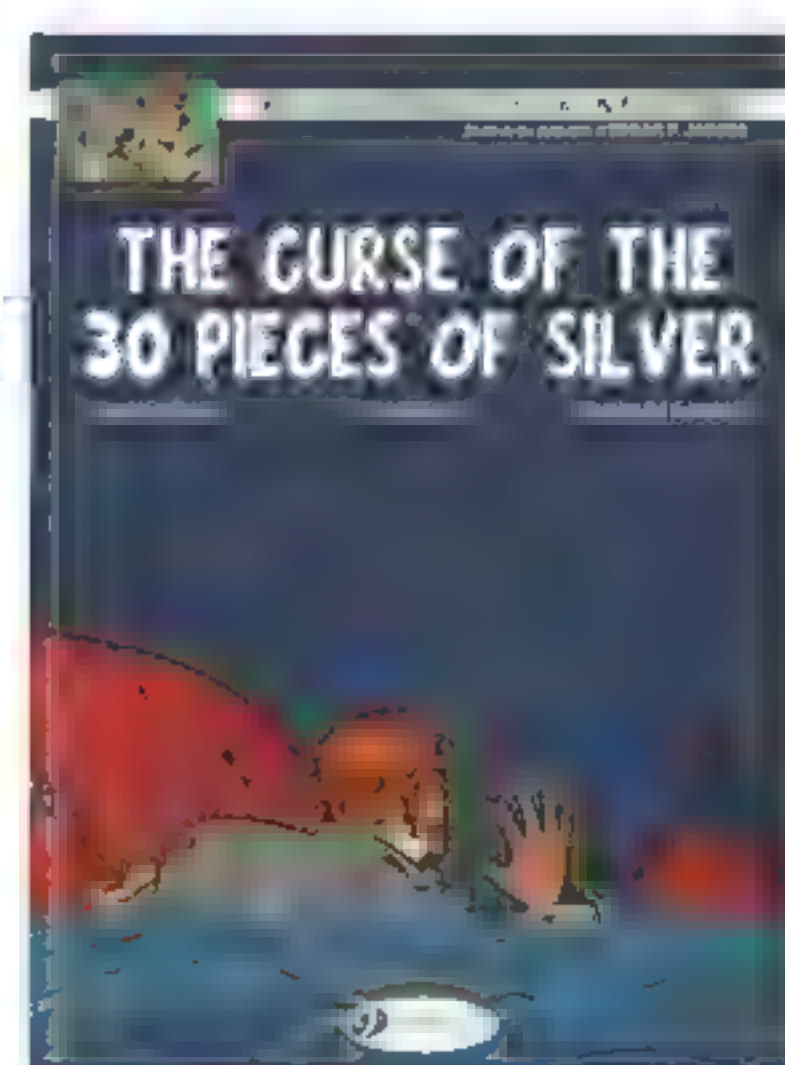
10-The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent Part 2
SENTE - JUILLARD



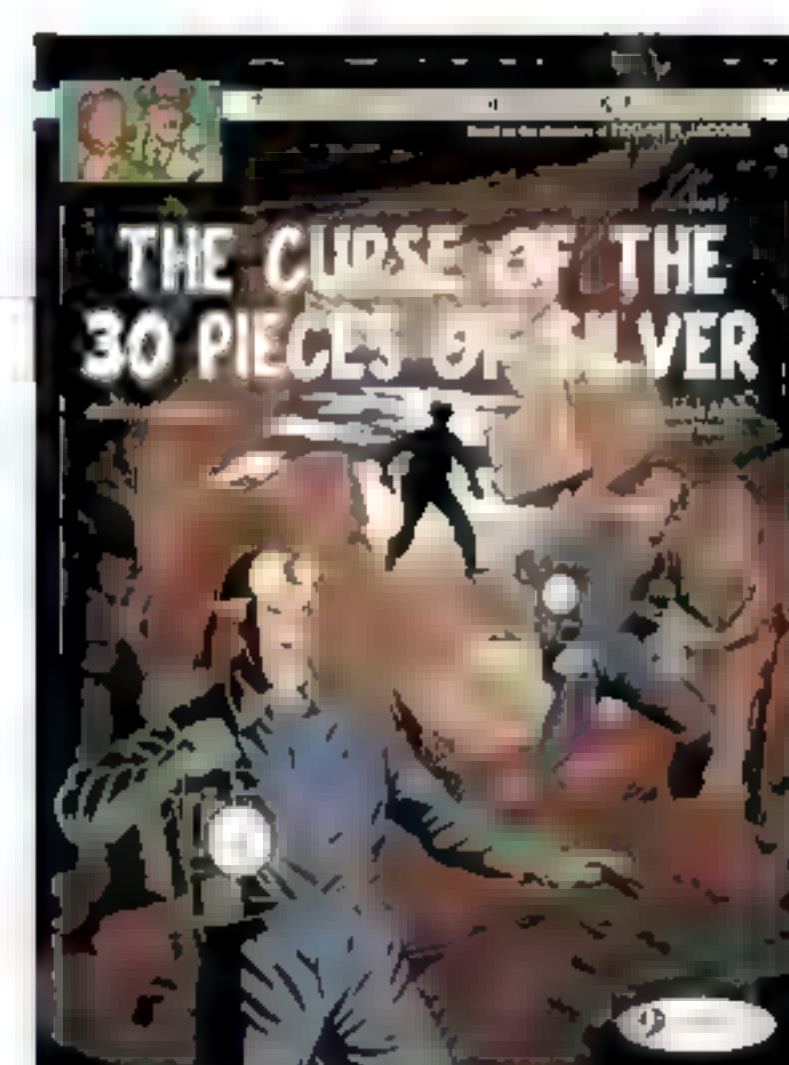
11-The Gondwana Shrine
SENTE - JUILLARD



12-Atlantis Mystery
EDGAR P. JACOBS



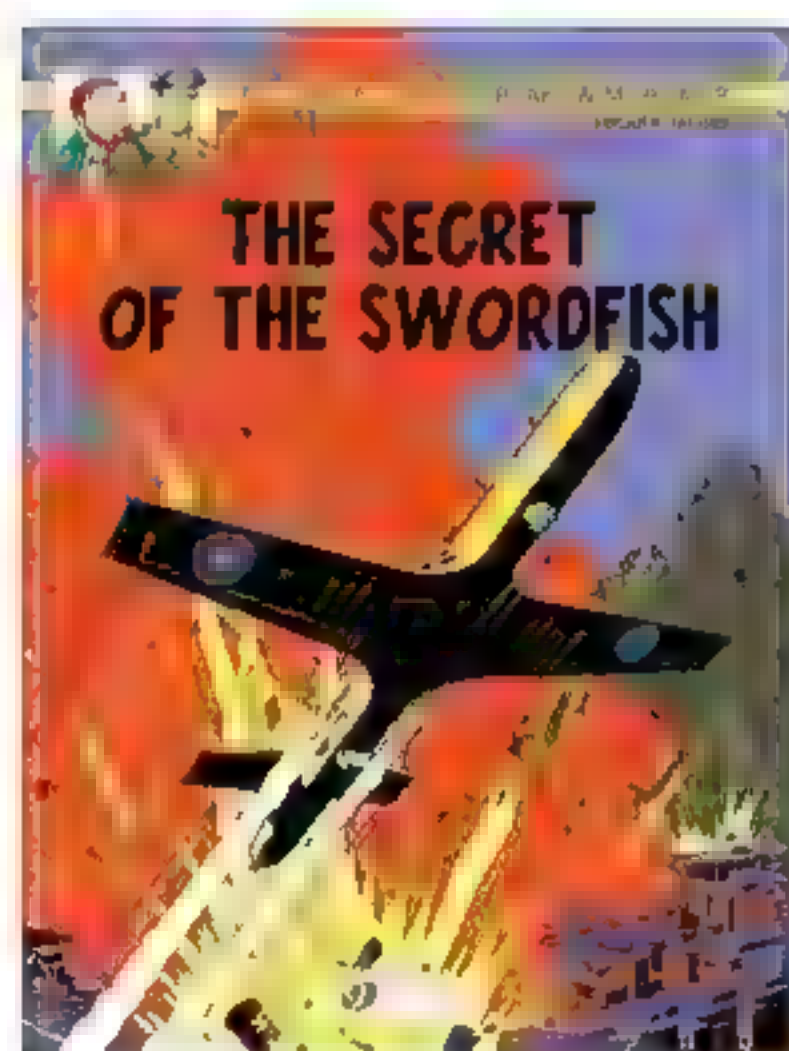
13-The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver Part 1
VAN HAMME - STERNE - DE SPIEGELEER



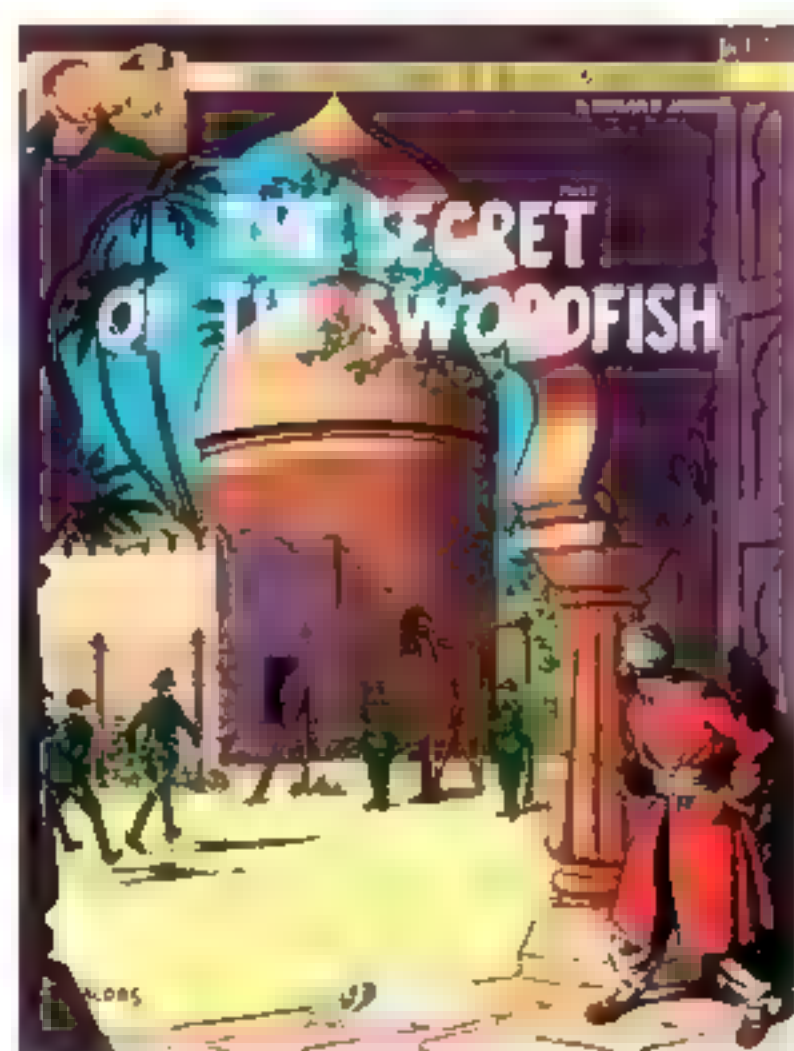
14-The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver Part 2
VAN HAMME - AUBIN - SCHRÖDER

2013

2014



15-The Secret of the Swordfish Part 1
EDGAR P. JACOBS



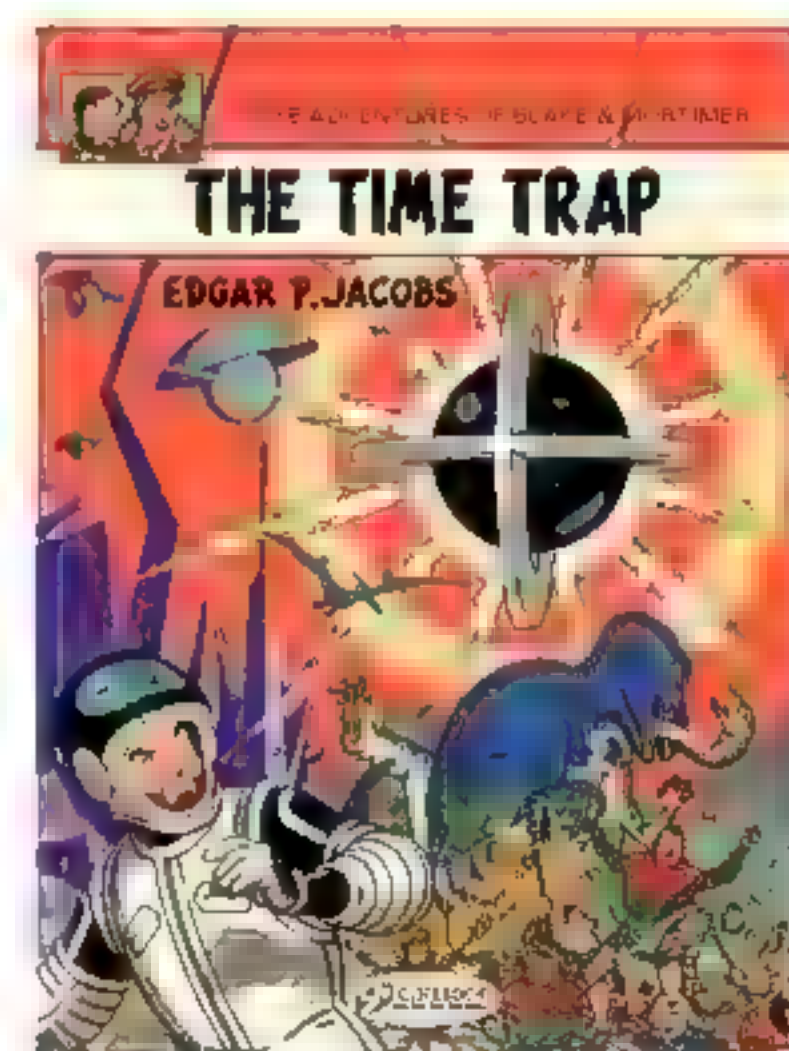
16-The Secret of the Swordfish Part 2
EDGAR P. JACOBS



17-The Secret of the Swordfish Part 3
EDGAR P. JACOBS



18-The Oath of the Five Lords
SENTE - JUILLARD



19-The Time Trap
EDGAR P. JACOBS

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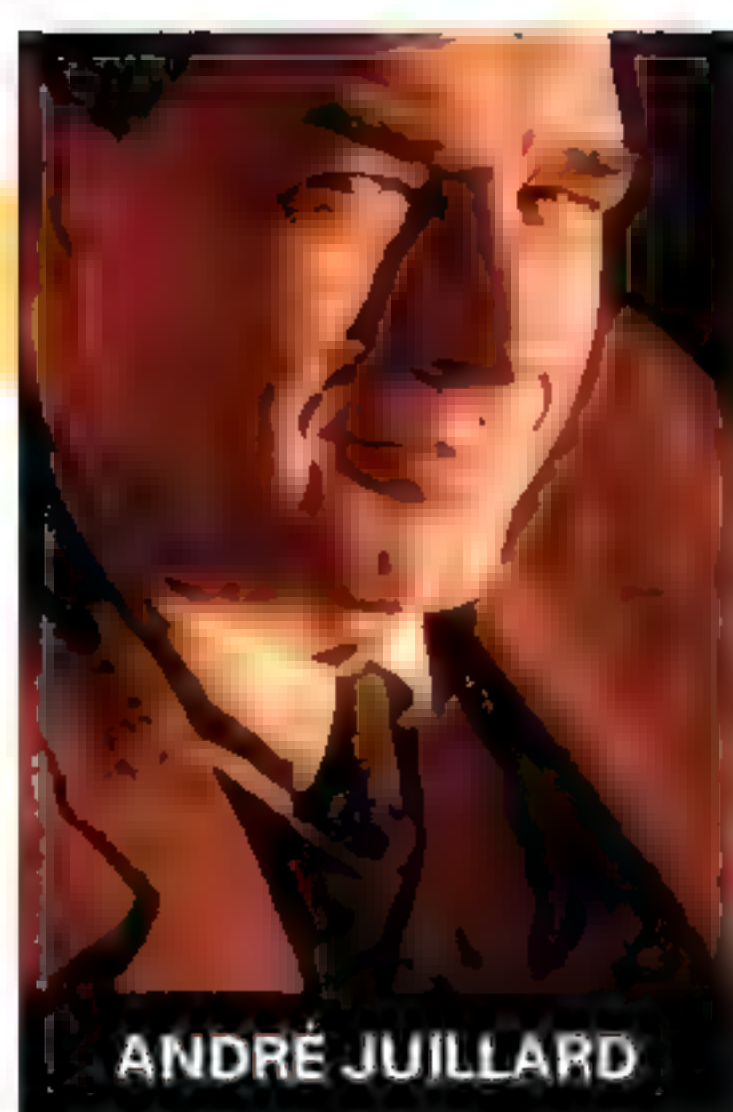
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BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE OATH OF THE FIVE LORDS

The Oath of the Five Lords is an extremely intense one-shot where the suspense is kept alive from page to page. Are you reviving the golden age of bandes dessinées?

First, I compose each page to balance the panels depending on the text. Then I cut the page in three strips. I realised without thinking about it that I really liked those strips, and I sent the story to the publisher like that, like an old-school serial. When I saw the result, I thought I'd always wanted to work in strips, like in the golden age of serials published in daily newspapers, that of the giants of comics – *Terry and the Pirates* by Milton Caniff, or *Tintin* by Hergé.



After 16 years of adventures to the far corners of the world, it was time for Blake & Mortimer to return to England?

The atmosphere of the story is somewhere between *The Yellow M* and *The Affair of the Necklace*...

The English setting is there to be forgotten so that the reader can focus on the characters. Everything takes place between London, Oxford and the West coast of England. I was meticulous with the details, to the point of checking the status of the road network and train times for those years. In these days of Internet, you could think that location scouting has become pointless, but seeing the sites for yourself can open unsuspected possibilities. While visiting the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, André Juillard and I were astonished by the violins room, and we thought about hiding one of the keys to the mystery of *The Oath of the Five Lords* in it... Beyond the notion of credibility, this scouting creates a commonality of spirit between the writer and the artist that brings human depth to the adventure.

Lawrence of Arabia is at the heart of the mystery in The Oath of the Five Lords. Blake and Mortimer confronted with a historical figure: is this a first?

Back in the 50s and 60s, you couldn't mess with History or politics. Jacobs placed his stories in his

What are the strong points of this crime story?

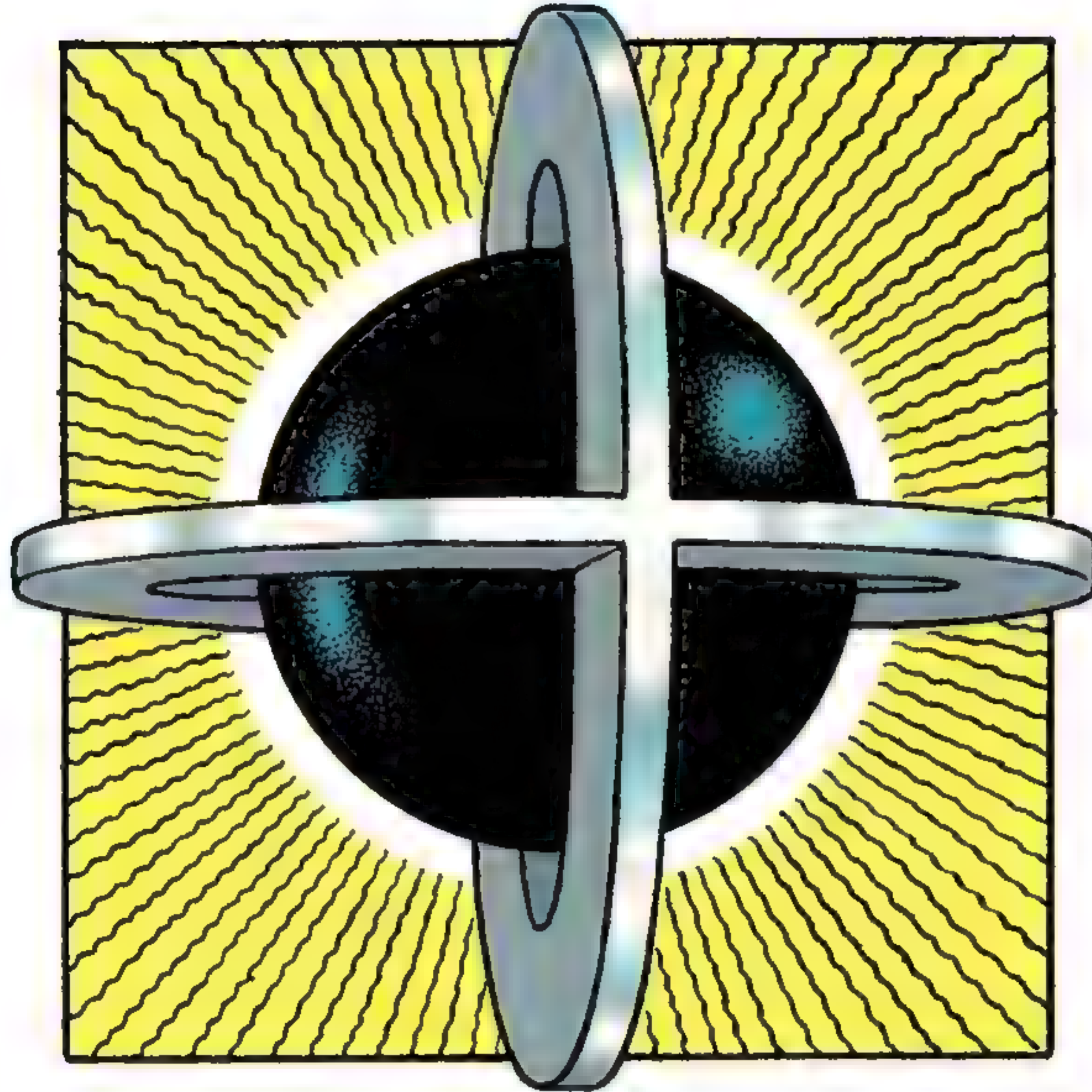
In this mystery anchored in historical facts, Blake and Mortimer are faced with a series of thefts and murders. A good deal of the action takes place in Oxford, which allowed us to look back upon Blake's youth and understand how he became the brilliant captain we know. When he was a student, he had a fascination for the character of Thomas Edward Lawrence, who would become first an archaeologist then a spy known as Lawrence of Arabia. Indirectly, the reader will learn that Blake played a very specific part in the disappearance of Lawrence of Arabia.

present, and it would have been inconceivable to publish a comic that included Winston Churchill as a character! Nowadays, the adventures of Blake and Mortimer take place in our past. So, why not use real historical figures? One day I found some articles in which a witness to Lawrence's fatal accident claimed he'd seen a black car at the scene. The man was never considered reliable, and he committed suicide a year later. Another troubling fact caught my attention: the disappearance of the manuscript of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, which Lawrence had taken years to write. He supposedly went about writing it again as if nothing had happened! Blake and Mortimer upset national interests and slip into these black holes of History.

Where do you place the line between reality and fiction when you ascribe to Lawrence the intention of meeting with the leader of the British fascist party, Oswald Mosley?

I challenge historians to prove me wrong. In 1935, Oswald Mosley was looking for popular heroes to increase his party's reach. He convinced Lawrence to accept a lunch meeting through the intermediary of writer Henry Williamson, a member of the British Union of Fascists. But on the day that Lawrence mailed his response to Williamson, he had a motorcycle accident. What really happened? It's up to Blake and Mortimer to find out...

AN ENEMY'S VENGEANCE FROM THE GRAVE TRAPS MORTIMER OUT OF TIME.



© Editions Blake & Mortimer / Studio Jacobs (Dargaud – Lombard s.a.) - E.P. Jacobs

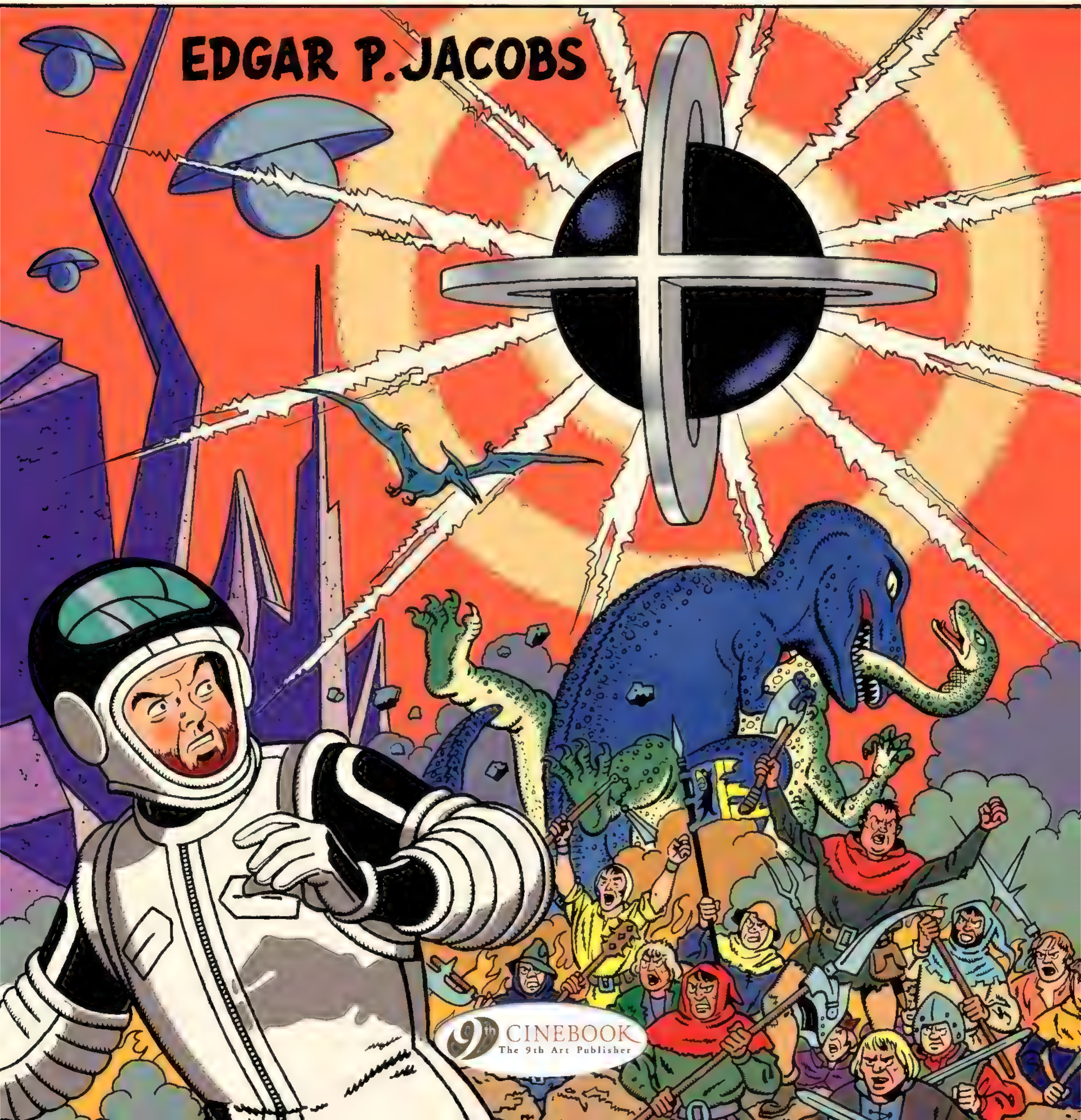
 EDGAR P. JACOBS - 1946	THE TIME TRAP SEPTEMBER 2014 PUBLISHED BY 
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THE ADVENTURES OF BLAKE & MORTIMER

THE TIME TRAP

EDGAR P. JACOBS



9th CINEBOOK
The 9th Art Publisher

BUT SOON, IN THE DIM LIGHT, MORTIMER BEGINS TO MAKE OUT A ROOM WITH CRACKED WALLS, FILLED WITH A JUMBLE OF ODD OBJECTS AND RICKETY FURNITURE INDICATIVE OF EXTREME POVERTY...



CONSPICUOUS AMONG THE MESS, AN OIL LAMP SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN LEFT THERE FOR HIM...



AFTER LIGHTING THE LAMP AND CLOSING THE DOOR, THE PROFESSOR PULLS THE SECOND ENVELOPE FROM HIS POCKET...



My dear fellow,

The time has come for you to receive your inheritance. I shall say it again: If I chose you, my former adversary, it is simply because I consider you the only one capable of appreciating my invention, and the only one entitled to use it!

Although I had miraculously escaped the destruction of the 'OOI' alive, I had received such a frightful dose of radiations that I decided to hole up in here and spend the few months I had left completing a machine I had been working on in secret for a long time. A machine that should have been the crowning achievement of my career: the Chronoscaphes!!! Yes, you read it right. That fantastic dream of science-fiction authors, that device capable of transporting a man to the time of his choice, past or future... **It exists, and it is yours!** I have tested it, and what it taught me allows me, at the final moment, to leave in peace!!!...

Your turn now, Professor! But first, follow the instructions included carefully. They will let you access my secret laboratory. The rest will come methodically.

Farewell, my dear fellow. Good luck, and no hard feelings.

Milosh

THE ASTOUNDING MESSAGE LEAVES OUR FRIEND STUNNED...



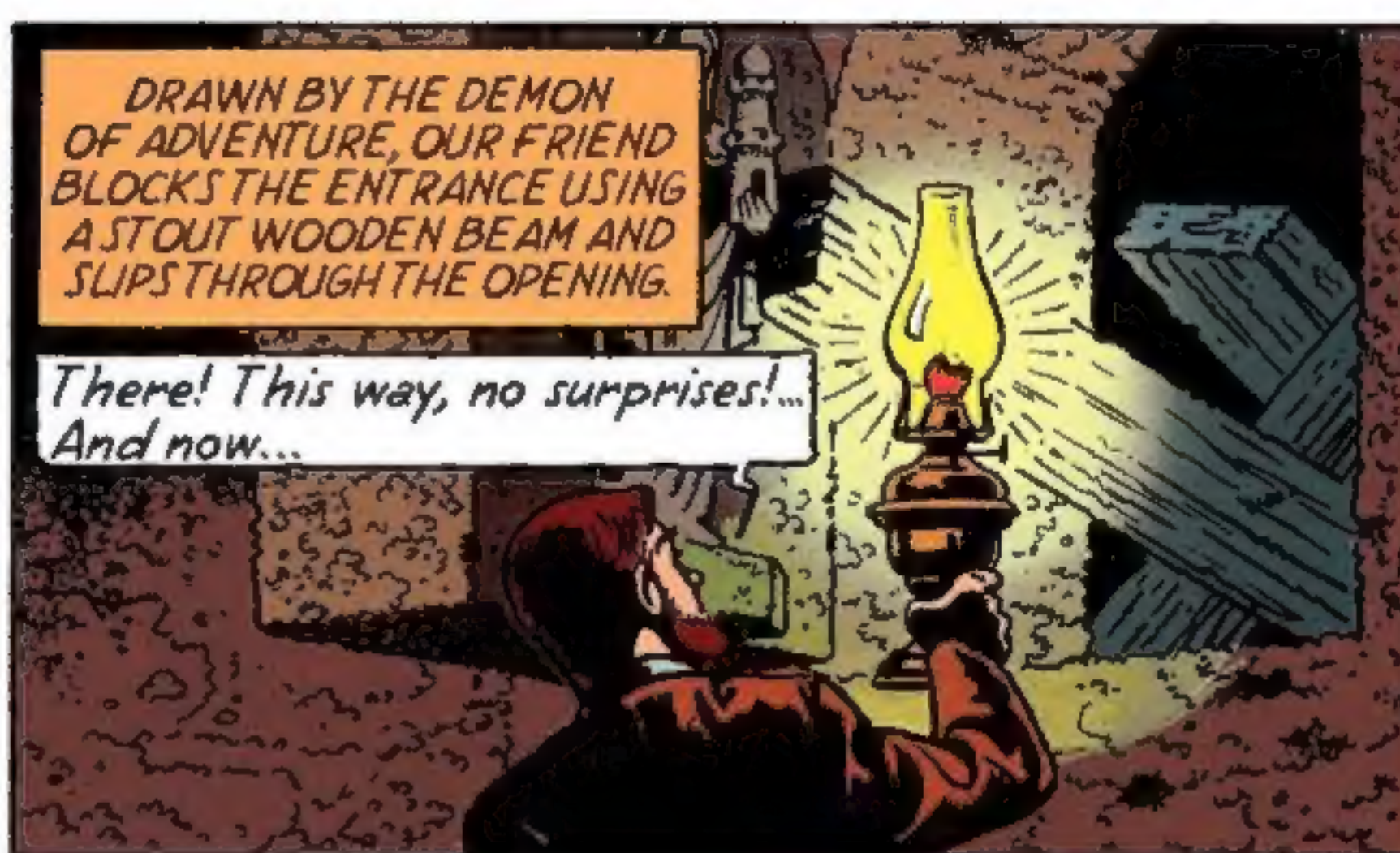
BUT MORTIMER STILL CAN'T STOP HIMSELF FROM READING ON...



...HAVING PASSED THE DOOR, MORTIMER FINDS HIMSELF IN A SMALL NOOK CARVED INTO THE CHALKY ROCK. INSIDE AN ALCOVE IN THE BACK WALL IS A ROUGH STATUE OF THE VIRGIN.



IMMEDIATELY, THE BACK OF THE ALCOVE SWINGS OPEN, ALONG WITH THE STATUE ATTACHED TO IT...



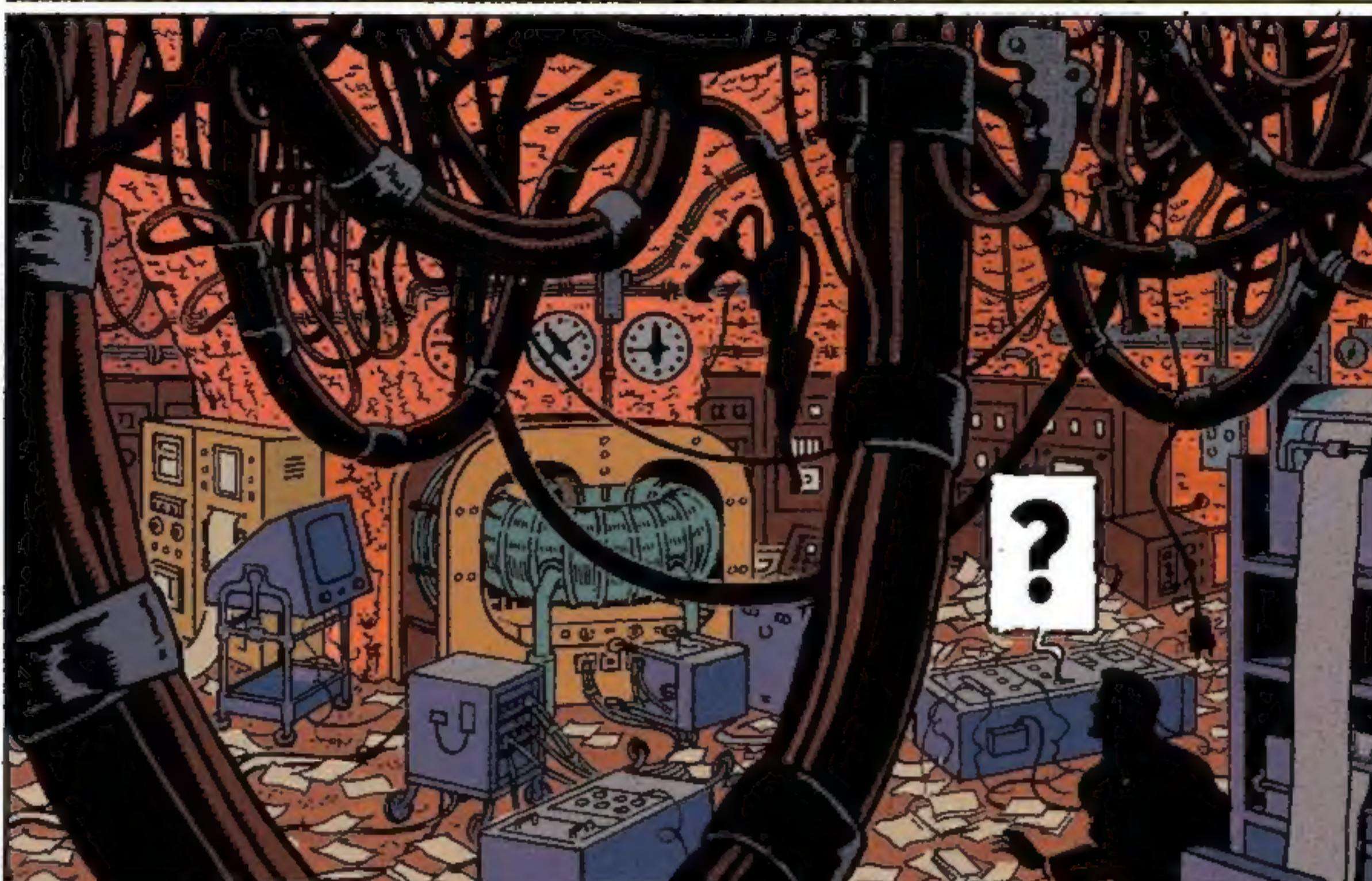
*A REGIONAL NAME FOR TROGLODYTE LODGINGS CARVED IN CHALKY ROCK.

WHEN THE PROFESSOR COMES TO, HE FEELS COMPELLED TO CURSE HIS OWN RECKLESSNESS!

What a damned fool I am!... And dead or alive, Milosh really pulled it off!... But if he thinks he's letting me rot in here, he's well off! In a couple of days Blake will be here, and knowing him, he'll pull this house apart to find me — one stone at a time if needed!... So it's just a question of time and patience.



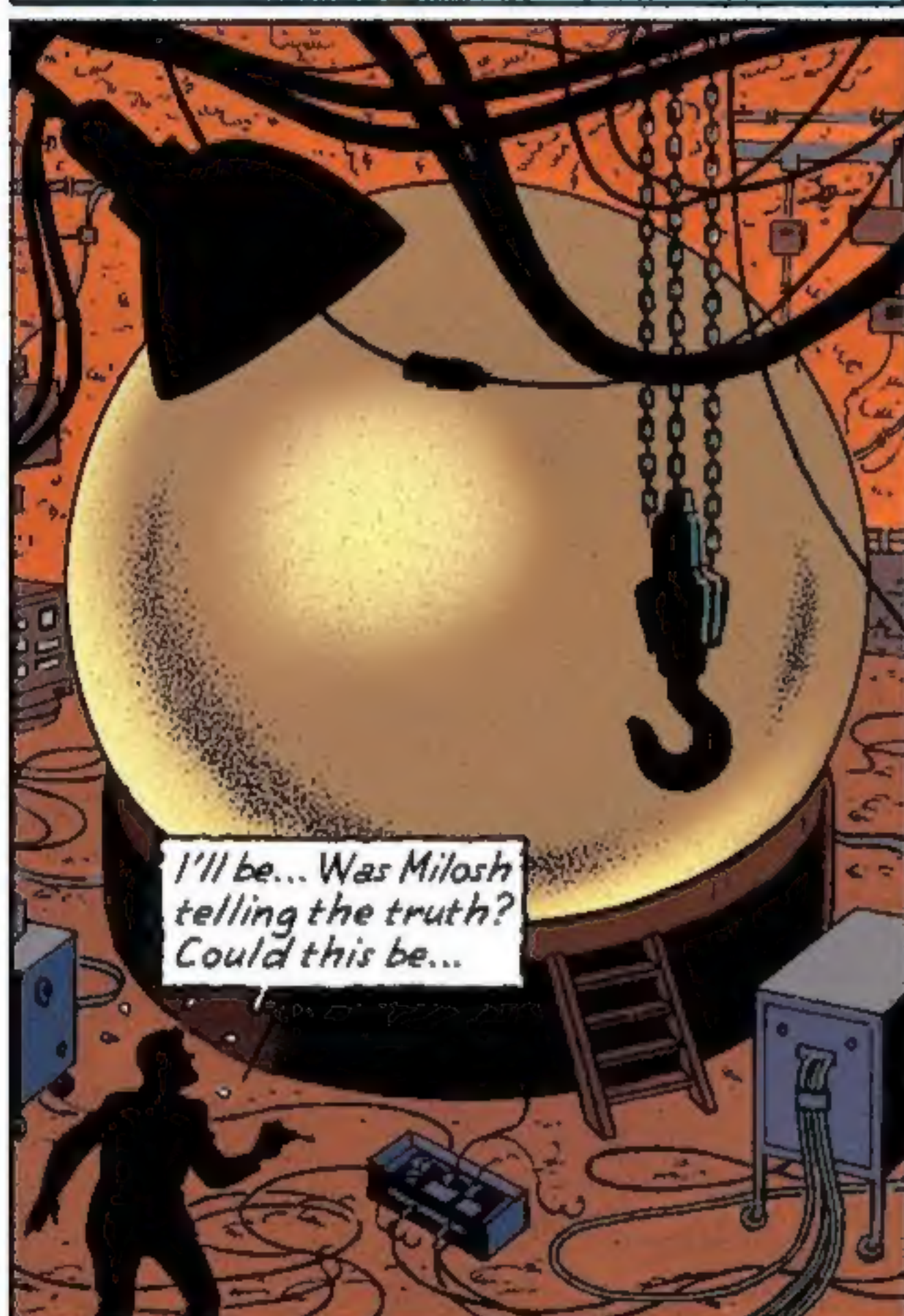
SOMEWHAT COMFORTED BY THIS LINE OF THOUGHT, HE CASTS A SURPRISED GLANCE AROUND AND DISCOVERS A VAST CRYPT. BATHED IN A STRANGE, DIM LIGHT, A MULTITUDE OF MACHINES LIE THERE, SAVAGELY SABOTAGED, STILL LINKED TOGETHER BY A JUMBLE OF WIRES AND CABLES...



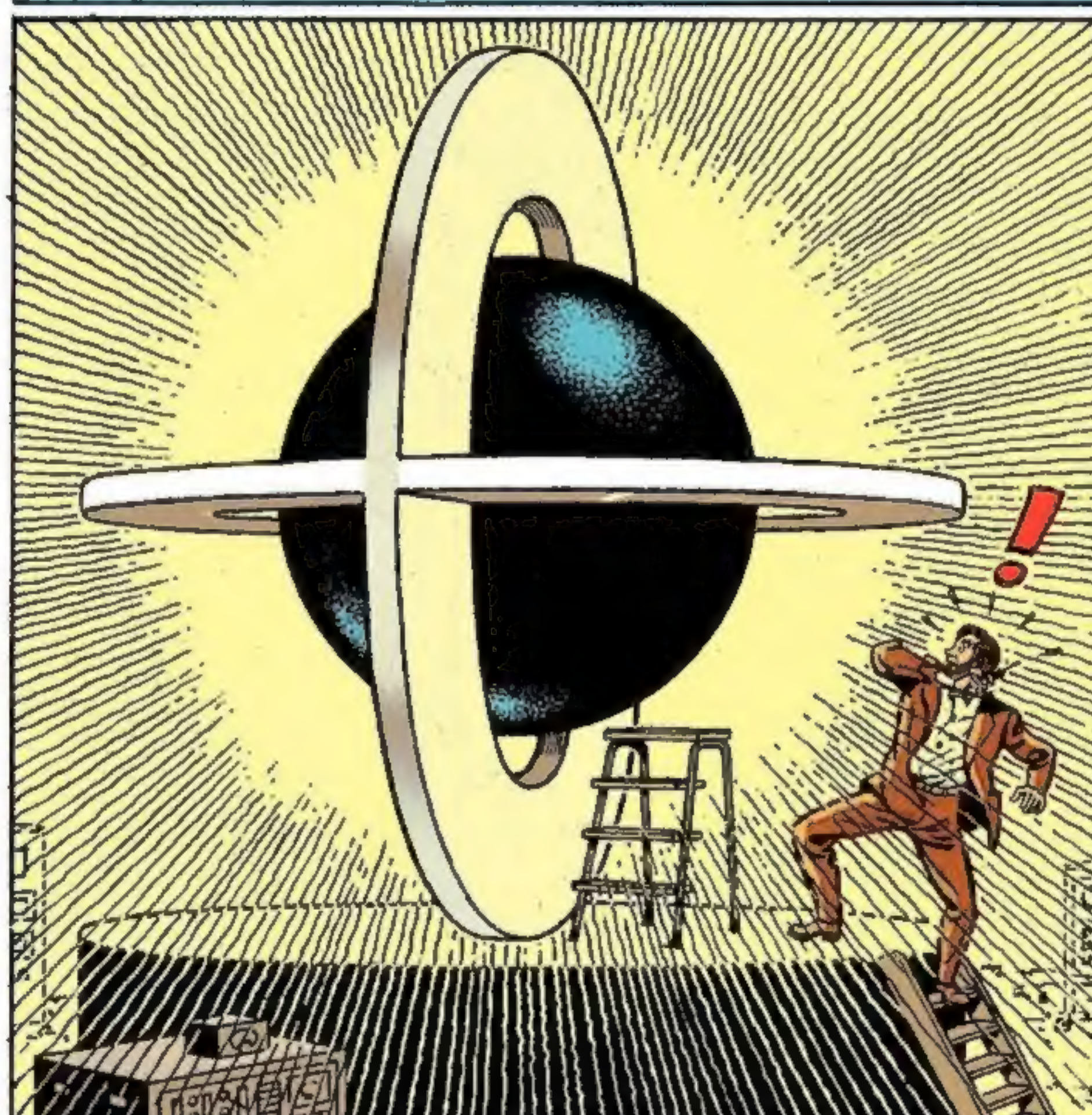
CAREFULLY, PISTOL IN HAND, MORTIMER STEPS FORWARD AMIDST THE SHATTERED DEBRIS OF THE STRANGE LABORATORY. BUT SUDDENLY, AS HE REACHES A SORT OF TRANSEPT, HE'S ROOTED TO THE SPOT!...



THERE, LIKE A GIANT BALL, A GLISTENING, ALMOST UNREAL DOME RESTS ON A METAL PLATFORM...



INTRIGUED BUT CAUTIOUS, MORTIMER APPROACHES THE OBJECT... BUT AS HE SETS FOOT ON THE PLATFORM, THE DOME BURSTS ABRUPTLY, REVEALING A PECULIAR LOOKING MACHINE... THE CHRONOSCAPE!



SIMULTANEOUSLY, A DEEP, LOUD VOICE, THE VOICE OF THE LATE MILOSH GEORGEVICH, CALLS OUT TO HIM:



MORTIMER LEAPS TO PUT HIS BACK TO THE WALL, TRYING TO LOCATE THE SPEAKER WHO CONTINUES, UNFAZED...

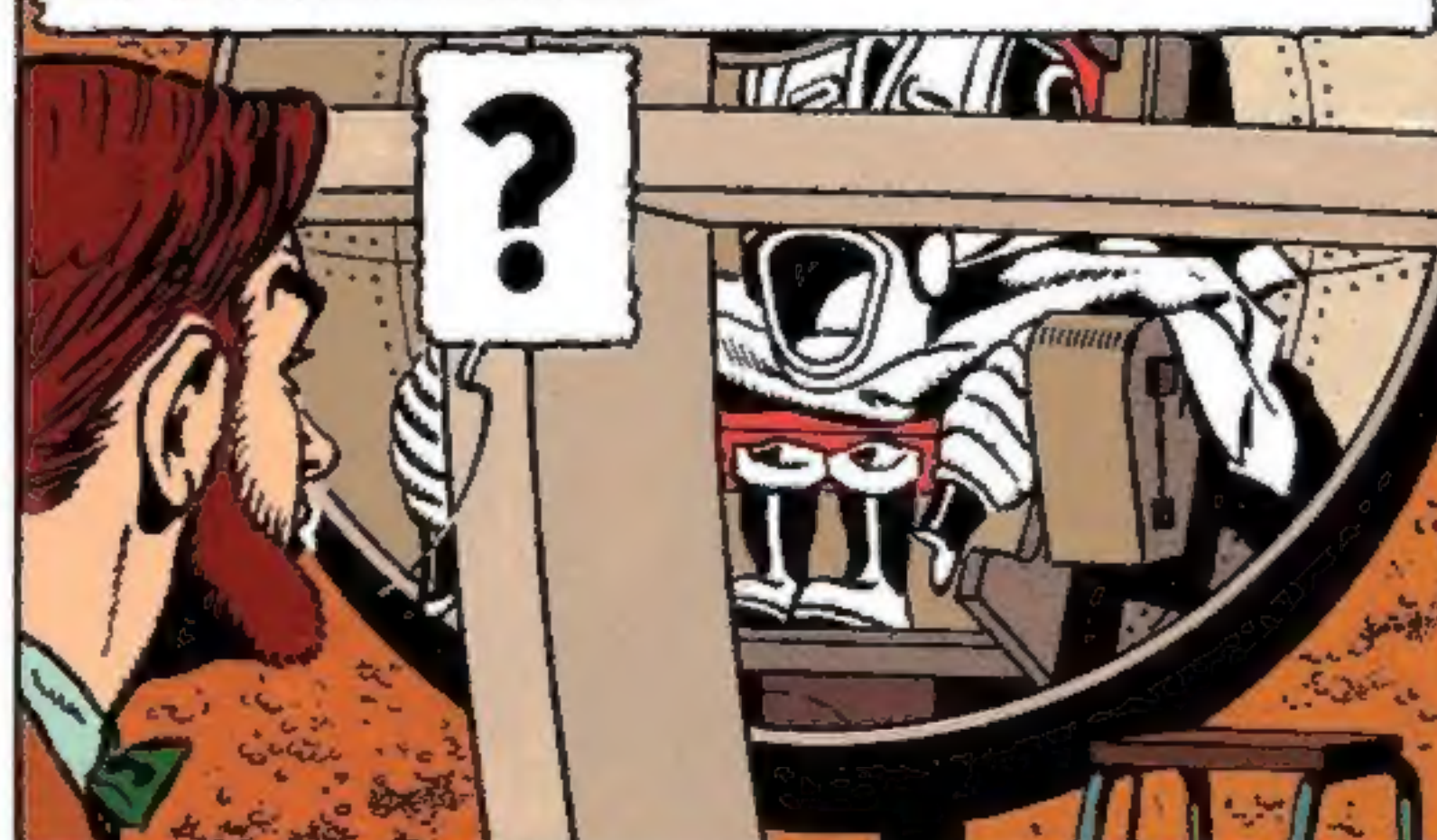
I'm glad, though hardly surprised, to see that your scientific curiosity was stronger than any caution... Do forgive me for shutting the secret door behind you. It was both a test of your nerves and a necessity. You see, only a man possessed of perfect self-control could safely attempt such a trip. And besides, a secret such as mine — and yours now — can never be sufficiently protected from the curiosity of the profane.

Heavens! I get it... A pre-recorded message on a magnetic tape; I triggered its playback when I stepped on the platform! Phew! That's better!!!



BUT THE VOICE IS ALREADY SPEAKING AGAIN, IN THE TONES OF A P.E. INSTRUCTOR ON THE RADIO, WHILE THE SPHERE OPENS SILENTLY, REVEALING A COCKPIT...

That said, in your interest, please follow these instructions step by step... To start with, please put on the special equipment that's on the machine's seat. Without it, you would face certain annihilation...



IS IT THE STRANGE LOCATION, THE BIZARRE ATMOSPHERE, THE PERSUASIVE TONE OF THAT VOICE FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE?... AT ANY RATE A SEEMINGLY BEWITCHED MORTIMER OBEYS AND, OVERCOMING HIS DISTRUST...

...BEGINS SLIPPING INTO THE INDICATED SUIT...

Very good... Very good... Make sure of the seal.

If Blake could see me... But to hell with it — I'll take the risk!



Edgard Félix Pierre Jacobs (1904–1987), better known under his pen name Edgar P. Jacobs, was a comic book creator (writer and artist), born in Brussels, Belgium. It has been said of Jacobs that he didn't remember a time when he hadn't drawn.

Jacobs assisted fellow Belgian Hergé (Georges Prosper Remi) in the recasting of Hergé's *Tintin in the Congo*, *Tintin in America*, *King Ottokar's Sceptre* and *The Blue Lotus* for book publication. He also contributed directly to both the drawing and storylines for the Tintin double-albums *The Secret of the Unicorn/Red Rackham's Treasure* and *The Seven Crystal Balls/Prisoners of the Sun*.

When the comics magazine Tintin was launched on 26th September 1946, it included Jacobs' story *Le secret de l'Espadon* (*The Secret of the Swordfish*). This story would be the first in the Blake and Mortimer series.

The characters of Captain Francis Blake, dashing head of MI5, his friend Professor Philip Mortimer, a nuclear physicist, and their sworn enemy Colonel Olrik became legendary heroes of the 9th art in the long-running series.

After Jacobs' death in 1987, Bob de Moor completed his unfinished last story. In the mid-1990s, the series was continued by the Jacobs Studios with new teams of writers and artists.



ORIGINAL FRENCH EDITION		
1	1950	Le secret de l'Espadon, T1
2	1953	Le secret de l'Espadon, T2
3	1953	Le secret de l'Espadon, T3
4	1954	Le mystère de la Grande Pyramide, T1
5	1955	Le mystère de la Grande Pyramide, T2
6	1956	La marque Jaune
7	1957	L'énigme de l'Atlantide
8	1959	S.O.S. Météores
9	1962	Le piège diabolique
10	1967	L'affaire du collier
11	1971	Les trois formules du professeur Satō, T1
12	1990	Les trois formules du professeur Satō, T2 (Jacobs/De Moor)
13	1996	L'affaire Francis Blake (Van Hamme/Benoit)
14	2000	La machination Voronov (Sente/Juillard)
15	2001	L'étrange rendez-vous (Van Hamme/Benoit)
16	2003	Les sarcophages du Sixième Continent, T1 (Sente/Juillard)
17	2004	Les sarcophages du Sixième Continent, T2 (Sente/Juillard)
18	2008	Le sanctuaire du Gondwana (Sente/Juillard)
19	2009	La malédiction des 30 deniers, T1 (Van Hamme/Sterne/De Spiegeleer)
20	2010	La malédiction des 30 deniers, T2 (Van Hamme/Aubin)
21	2012	Le serment des cinq Lords (Sente/Juillard)

CINEBOOK EDITION		
15	2013	The Secret of the Swordfish, Part 1
16	2013	The Secret of the Swordfish, Part 2
17	2013	The Secret of the Swordfish, Part 3
2	2007	The Mystery of the Great Pyramid, Part 1
3	2008	The Mystery of the Great Pyramid, Part 2
1	2007	The Yellow "M"
12	2012	Atlantis Mystery
6	2009	S.O.S. Meteors
19	2014	The Time Trap
7	2010	The Affair of the Necklace
		Professor Satō's Three Formulas, Part 1
		Professor Satō's Three Formulas, Part 2
4	2008	The Francis Blake Affair
8	2010	The Voronov Plot
5	2009	The Strange Encounter
9	2011	The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent, Part 1
10	2011	The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent, Part 2
11	2011	The Gondwana Shrine
13	2012	The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver, Part 1
14	2012	The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver, Part 2
18	2014	The Oath of the Five Lords



LYNX-EMPIRE